BEYOND LANGUAGE and REASON

Mysticism in Indian Buddhism

ILKKA PYYSIĀINEN

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Olen aina pelännyt, että eläin kätkee äänettömyyteensä jonkin hirvittävän salaisuuden, jota me ihmiset turhaan etsimme.

(I've always been afraid that an animal hides in its silence some terrible secret that we humans seek in vain.)

– Pentti Saarikoski: Nuoruuden päiväkirjat (toim. Pekka Tarkka). Helsinki: Otava 1984.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate the meaning of mysticism in Indian Buddhism. This task is accomplished through a religion-phenomenological analysis trying to relate the ideas expressed in Buddhist texts to certain human ways of experiencing one's being-in-the-world. Underlying this approach is a view of religious texts as "tracks" of various kinds of human experiences, mystical and otherwise.

Mystical experiences are here understood against the background of Heidegger's and Gadamer's idea of a linguistic basis of human reality. In mystical experience, this basis is transcended, and reality is experienced without the boundaries of language and discursive thinking.

The specific characteristics of mystical experience have been adopted from Paul Griffiths' division of mystical experience into three types: 1) an experience of pure consciousness, 2) an unmediated experience, and 3) a nondualistic experience. The presence of any of these characteristics allows us to regard an experience as mystical.

In the first case, a person is conscious, although his or her consciousness is not directed towards any content and does not have as its phenomenological attribute visual, olfactory or any other type of sensory experience. In the second case, we have a mental event that may have as its necessary condition a certain (culture-bound) conceptual scheme without it being necessary that the phenomenological attributes or content of the mental event in question reflect any element of that conceptual scheme. The third case refers to a mental event whose phenomenological attributes or content do not include any structural opposition between subject and object.

The sources of this study consist of Buddhist literature representing *Theravâda*, *Sarvâstivâda*, *Lokottaravâda*, early Mahâyâna, *Mâdhyamika*, and *Yogâcâra/Vijñânavâda*, as well as the *Tathâgatagarbha*-literature.

In the *Aṭṭhakavagga* of the *Suttanipâta*, passages were found that clearly point to a mystical experience that could count as a pure consciousness event, or at least an unmediated or a nondualistic experience. It is possible that this experience represents something essential to the Buddha's original *Seinsverständnis*, or at least to the *Seinsverständnis* of the

earliest community. It may only have been suppressed when the ideological development took the form of *abhidharma* in which a special "language of salvation" was elaborated at the cost of the claim that the ultimate goal is ineffable.

The tradition of the *Aṭṭhakavagga* seems to have somehow continued in the notion of 'cessation of mental representations and feeling (*saññâvedayitanirodha*)' which, in a few passages of the *Tipiṭaka*, is clearly identified with nirvâṇa. This is an experience that physically resembles cataleptic trance, hibernation of some mammals, or coma. Mentally it is an experience where ordinary functions of sense-perception, concept-formation and ratiocination have ceased. As such, it is a deconstruction of the world, subjectively constructed by organizing sensory data with the thinking mind (*citta*).

It is, nevertheless, difficult to take this cessation as an experience of pure consciousness as it is usually conceived of as an unconscious state, although some early Buddhist authors have held that it was not 'mindless' (*acittaka*) but that only mental *activity* had ceased in it. If the cessation, however, was an integral aspect of nirvâṇa, it would be much easier to understand its significance if it were a conscious mystical experience of any of the three kinds.

On the other hand, the early Buddhists felt it problematic to explain how one could re-emerge from this state, and for this reason postulated a special consciousness (*âlayavijñâna*) that survived the state of cessation. However, we cannot be certain whether *âlayavijñâna* is a purely theoretical concept, refers to an unconscious state, or to a conscious mystical experience. In any case, it is said to have an object and content, although they are 'indistinct,' 'extremely subtle' and not experienced.

In Mahâyâna texts we found a conception of reality that is neatly summarized in the words '*prapañca*' and '*vikalpa*'. The first one means both 'language' and 'world', and thus is testimony of an idea of a linguistic basis of reality. The driving force of *prapañca* is *vikalpa* ('imagination,' 'construction') that divides the world of silence into categories expressed in language.

The ultimate reality, however, is reached only through 'unconstructed awareness (*nirvikalpakajñâna*)' that is identical with its object (i.e. is unintentional) which is the 'ineffable reality (*anabhilâpyadharmatâ*)' and 'not-selfness (*nairâtmyadharmatâ*)'. Its content is 'absence of characteristics (*animitta*)'. Thus, unconstructed awareness refers to an unmediated and non-dualistic mystical experience and may even count as a pure consciousness event.

Consequently, Buddhist thought has clearly been influenced by mystical experiences, and these experiences have in turn been given meaning through conceptual and mythological thinking. Here we encounter the dilemma of expressing and describing an ineffable experience. Even though the mystical experience would be genuinely ineffable as it occurs, it is

described *afterwards* in so many words because language is such a central element in human reality. Thus, religious or philosophical ideas provide the ideological content in contentless experiences.

It becomes clear that the Buddha figure has been the central element through which the mystical experiences have been given content and meaning. The ultimate reality is referred to, using such expressions as 'the Buddha's Dharma-body' and '*tathâgatagarbha*' ('womb' or 'germ of the *Tathâgata*'). However, these are only 'skillful means (*upâya*)' to point to the ultimate truth (*paramârtha*), and thus should not be confused with the truth itself. In the last analysis, everything is empty (*śûnya*).

PREFACE

And now, that the end is near ... The song immediately comes to mind when I realize that the time has come to finally write this preface to a study that has taken me several years. I have lived with this work for quite some time, I have laughed and cried, and I have done it my way. However, these pages have not been written in a hermitage, and thus I owe a great debt to many people who have been of help in one way or another. I am afraid it is not possible to recognize all of them here by name, but that does not mean I will not remember them in my heart.

I have studied religion under Professor Juha Pentikäinen, head of the Department of the Study of Religions at the University of Helsinki, since 1980 and I am very grateful to him for his encouragement and support during different phases. In the study of Buddhism, I was led by Dr. René Gothóni whom I want to thank for his support in getting myself established in the academic environment. I have also studied philosophy of religion under the guidance of Professor Simo Knuuttila (the University of Helsinki) whose interest in my work, encouragement and help I will recall with gratitude.

My unofficial supervisor in questions regarding Buddhism has for many years been Mr. Harry Halén, Lic.Phil. (the University of Helsinki). I wish to express my warmest thanks to him. I have also had the pleasure of discussing Indology and the history of Buddhist studies with Dr. Klaus Karttunen (the University of Helsinki) whom I wish to thank as well.

The topic of this dissertation is an outcome of a process during which my interest has gradually shifted from the biography of the Buddha to more philosophical questions. In this connection, I would like to mention with thankfulness the encouraging comments I received for my work on the Buddha's biography from Professors André Bareau (Collège de France) and Frank E. Reynolds (the University of Chicago).

As I began to realize what cosmic dimensions the symbolism of the Buddha's figure and story had, my interest was directed toward exploring the essentials of Buddhist ontology with regard to human ways of experiencing one's being in-the-world. This was accompanied by a theoretical interest in finding the best possible way of approaching religion, an interest I have for some years shared with my friends and colleagues

Mr. Veikko Anttonen, Lic.Phil., Mr. Teuvo Laitila, Lic.Phil., Ms. Petra Pentikäinen, Lic.Phil., Ms. Terhi Utriainen, MA and Dr. Kari Vesala (all from the University of Helsinki). Numerous but lengthy conversations with these people have had a most profound effect on my way of thinking about religion. I want to express my warmest thanks for these discussions to each one of these individuals. I also do not want to underestimate the value of all those nights we have just had a good time together; and I am especially grateful to those who have turned out to be real friends when the going has been tough.

My gratitude also extends to all those friends and colleagues at the Department of the Study of Religions with whom it has been a pleasure to work: Ms. Eeva Anttila, Dr. Raimo Harjula, Dr. Eila Helander, Dr. Helena Helve, Mr. Harri Markkula, MA, Ms. Tuija Kastinen, Mr. Ismo Pellikka, Lic. Theol., Mr. Kari Saari, Lic.Phil. and Mr. Leo Väyrynen, M.Theol. Special thanks are due to Ms. Tuula Juurikka, MA, for discussions on the psychology of mysticism.

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The preparation of this study has been made financially possible by the University of Helsinki through a long-term scholarship. I thank the University of Helsinki for this support.

As to the English language of the study, I wish to express my warmest thanks to Ms. Marolyn Downing, MA for revising my English.

So numerous are the people to whom I am indebted that I can here finally mention only my parents Tuulikki and Jussi Pyysiäinen, my brother, Dr. Markku Pyysiäinen together with his wife, the registered nurse Ms. Liisa Pyysiäinen, M. Theol., and their children Jaana and Jarkko Pyysiäinen, as well as my former wife, the journalist Pirjo Pyysiäinen, M. Theol. Last but not least: *Gracias a la vida*!

In my study, after dark

4th February 1993

Ilkka Pyysiäinen

1. LANGUAGE AND MYSTICISM

1.1. Is Buddhism Essentially Mystical?

"One should never forget that Buddhism is above all mysticism", wrote André Bareau in his study on the concept of the Absolute in Buddhist philosophy[1]. He continued:

> The Buddhist philosophy rests essentially on its mysticism. It is from mysticism that it has drawn its subject matter and it is mysticism it wants to express.[2]
> Buddhism represents a unique case in the history of religions and in the history of philosophy in the sense that it is based on pure mysticism and its fundamental absolute is a purely mystical absolute.[3]

However, Bareau doesn't introduce the concept of mysticism until his conclusions, and does not put forward any comprehensive definition of mysticism. It is my intention in this study to investigate aspects of the question What is the place and meaning of mysticism to Buddhism[4]? This task is divided into three questions as follows: 1) In what sense could Buddhism be "*above all*" mysticism, or "rest *essentially*" on mysticism or be based on "*pure*" mysticism? 2) What is meant by mysticism? and 3) Is Buddhism mystical – and in what sense precisely?

In this first chapter of the study I attempt to answer the first two questions hypothetically, i.e. to answer in what sense Buddhism *could* be above all or essentially mysticism, and what mysticism is. Then follows an analysis of Buddhist texts purporting to show whether this can reasonably be said to be the case or not and in what sense. Thus, an answer to the third question will be provided.

However, 'Buddhism' is a vague and treacherous term, leading easily to an ontological way of thinking about Buddhism as an entity, or of the essence of Buddhism in an Aristotelian sense. Thus, there have been nu-

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1 Bareau 1951, 279. la Vallée Poussin 1937, 206: "Il nous semble aujourd'hui que le Bouddhisme est surtout une 'mystique du Nirvâṇa' ..."

2 Bareau 1951, 281.

3 Bareau 1951, 299. Besides Bareau's work, the existence of the mystical element is recognized in Buddhism in e.g. Smart 1965, 81; Ling 1965, 163, 170; Yandell 1974, 173; Almond 1982, *passim*; Marcoulesco 1987, 240 and Dupré 1987, 249.

4 According to James Leuba (1925, 305), "(t)he influence of mystical trance upon philosophical systems would make one of the most curious chapters of the history of philosophy."

merous attempts in Western literature to solve the problem of whether Buddhism is a religion, a philosophy, a discipline of salvation, an ethics, a way of life, a system of psychology, etc.[5]

I myself do not see Buddhism as an entity, which is what it is through some distinctive feature which the scholar should detect. Defining Buddhism is a purely nominal affair having to do with the meaning of a word, not with the essence of a thing.[6] Moreover, it is the scholar who makes "Buddhism"; Buddhism, as we understand it, has no independent existence apart from the community of scholars[7].

Thus, the characterization of Buddhism as *essentially* mysticism should not be based – consciously or unconsciously – on the philosophical distinction between essence and accident, in the sense that mysticism would be the essence of Buddhism while all other features were merely accidental.[8] In this connection, "essentially" can only mean that mysticism is somehow *central* to either the practices or doctrines of Buddhism. Moreover, 'mysticism' only provides a point of view from which to conceptualize certain Buddhist phenomena, and thus doesn't indicate an attempt to find the essence of Buddhism in an ontological sense.

I regard, on the basis of the idea of "sacred biographies" as developed by Frank Reynolds and Donald Capps[9], as formally central those parts of the Buddhist message that explain the Buddha's religious experiences as well as the nature and meaning of his person to Buddhism. In founded religions, like Buddhism, the doctrinal development naturally starts with the founder's experiences that lead him (or her) to preach a new message. However, we should take into account that the majority of the founder's experience(s), like most experiences, are influenced by the existing tradition to which the founder wants to give new interpretation[10].

Disciples then compile the founder's "sacred biography" in which they present an authoritative interpretation of the meaning that the founder and his experiences have for his followers. The sacred biography serves as a basis on which all new interpretations are built, and from which they claim to derive their authority. It conveys a certain "biographical image" that becomes the model for the experiences and interpretations of the followers.[11] Thus, Buddhism is not only *from* the Buddha, but also *about* the Buddha[12].

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[5] See Chatalian 1983, 167–171. Cf. Southwold 1978.

[6] See Comstock 1984, 500, 506.

[7] See Comstock 1984, 503–504.

[8] See Comstock 1984, 505.

[9] Reynolds & Capps 1976.

[10] On this continuity and change in the Buddha's biography, see Pyysiäinen 1988, 59–68, 87–89.

[11] Reynolds & Capps 1976, 3–7. See Pyysiäinen 1988, 87–89 on the "ultimate imagery" of sacred biographies.

[12] To paraphrase Ninian Smart (1973, 149) who says that Christianity is more about Jesus than from Jesus.

The contents of the sacred biography are then elaborated by subsequent generations in a hermeneutical circle where new experiences contribute to the development of new doctrines, and new doctrines shape people's experiences. This process is also a process of mythologizing the founder and his experiences.[13]

However, all central doctrines are not directly Buddhological[14], but deal with cosmology, man's position in the world and of man's ultimate goal, yet having their ultimate basis in Buddhology. Thus, we can say that Buddhism is essentially mystical if mysticism penetrates its doctrine and related practice, that are central in the above described sense.

Furthermore, the notion of "pure" mysticism could be so understood, for instance that mystical experiences are given only a minimum of interpretation and that the experiencing of mystical experiences remains the most important element at the expense of a doctrinal superstructure to be simply adopted and followed.

I have, in addition, confined myself to early Indian Buddhism, as it is of course impossible to cover whole Buddhism in a single study. In this way, it is also possible to focus on the historical roots of Buddhist doctrine. Furthermore, the selection of sources covers, with one exception, Indian Buddhism only up to the founders of the two important Mahâyâna schools, *Nâgârjuna* (*Mâdhyamika* school), *Vasubandhu* and *Asaṅga* (*Yogâcâra/Vijñânavâda* school), together with the important summary of "Hînayâna", the *Abhidharmakośa*[15].

"Traditionally", Luis Gómez writes, "the end of Indian Buddhism has been identified with the sack of the two great universities by the troops of the Turk *Muḥammad Ghûrî*: Nâlandâ in 1197 and Vikramaśîla 1203"[16]. However, after this Buddhism still lingered on for some time; and scholars still have not reached any final agreement concerning the reasons for its ultimate decline.[17]

It may have been precipitated by the Muslim invasion, although the primary factors were internal. The most important of these were the gradual

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[13] The pattern of this process is presented in diagram 1. on next page, constructed on the basis of Pentikäinen 1978, 40. Pentikäinen's chart is, in turn, based on Claude Shannon's (1963, 5) diagram of a general communication system.

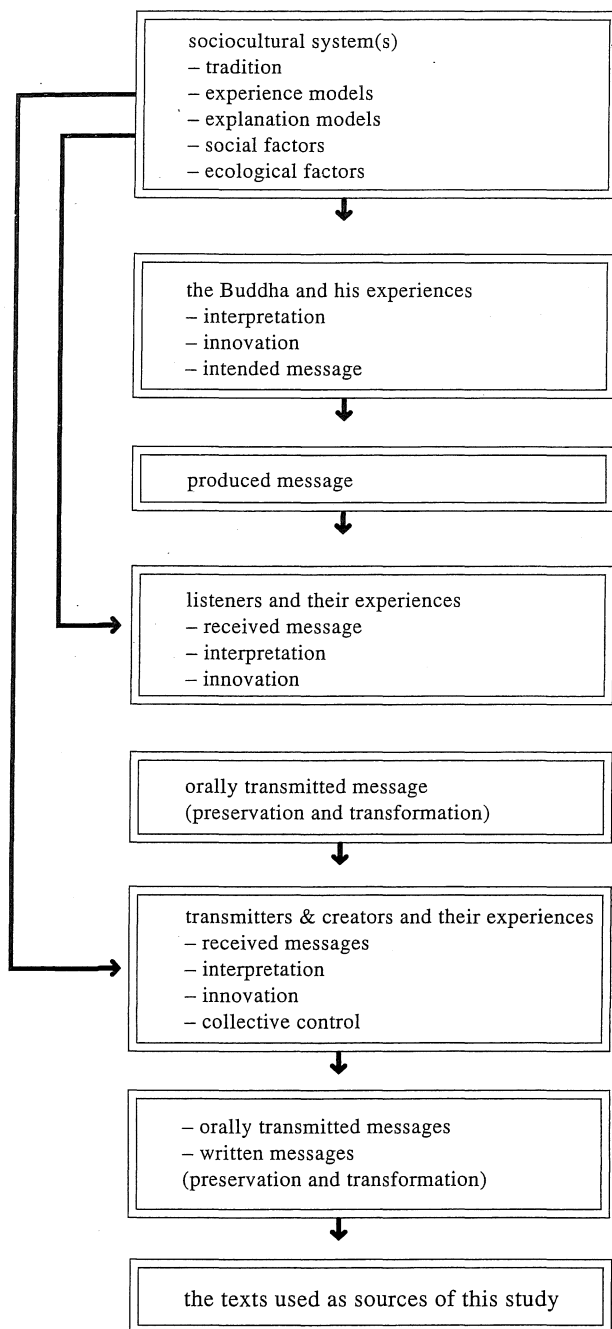
[14] In 1956 J.W. de Jong (1979, 23) suggested that the "concepts which are to be found in the works of Western scholars concerning the figure of the Buddha" could be grouped under the heading of 'Buddhology' on the analogy of the term 'Christology'. This has been done before and after his proposal in, e.g., Bareau 1951, 219; Conze 1960, 9; Takasaki 1966, 30 n. 49; Reynolds & Hallisey 1987, 331, and Snellgrove 1987, 29 where the form 'buddh*a*logical' (but on p. 53 'buddh*o*logical') is used. However, the term is also used for concepts found in *Buddhist* sources.

[15] See below pp. 54–61, 69–75.

[16] Gómez 1987c, 379–380.

[17] Gómez 1987c, 380.

Diagram 1. The development of the Buddhist tradition



assimilation of Buddhism into Hinduism, and the fact that Buddhism was dependent on monastic insitutions that did not have broad popular support, but relied exclusively on royal patronage.[18]

Nowadays, Buddhism is found on the South Asian subcontinent only in Bengal and in the Himalayan regions, especially in Ladakh and Nepal, and as the dominant group in Bhutan and Sikkim. In addition to this, it is represented by Tibetan refugees and pilgrims and missionaries flocking to the sacred sites in India. However, these forms of Buddhism are not representative of what Indian Buddhism was in the past.[19]

1.2. Methodological Considerations

1.2.1. Experience, expression and meaning

Mysticism consists of certain kinds of experiences together with their expressions and interpretations. However, we can never study experiences directly – neither in history nor in the present –, but only through their expressions and interpretations[20]. Thus, in studying ancient Buddhist *texts* embodying the tradition that originally was partly oral in nature, we do not find experiences, but only "publicly observable tracks" of experiences[21]. As tracks of human experiences, Buddhist texts have an existential root in historical human experience, and can be regarded as objectifications of the human mind trying to understand its own being-in-the-world[22].

By 'experience' I refer to the totality of feelings, thoughts, intentional attitudes and other possible forms of conscious life through which persons realize their position in the world. I want especially to stress that I do not identify experience only with feeling, or take it to refer only to mystical or other kinds of "peak" experiences.[23]

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[18] Gómez 1987c, 380.

[19] Gómez 1987c, 351.

[20] Staal 1975, 31: "Experiences are always approached in terms of interpretations." See also Wach 1946, 14 and 1958, 60; Streng 1967, 17–19; Holm 1987, 34; Pyysiäinen 1988, 91–94.

[21] The quotation is from Batson & Ventis 1982, 18.

[22] This kind of Heideggerian approach has previously been applied by e.g. Hans Jonas in his study of Gnosticism (see Jonas 1934–1954, esp. I 10–14, II 4–9). Cf. also Pentikäinen 1989, 12–13, and Räisänen 1987 and 1988, 468 on 'experience' as "a key to the interpretation of the Bible".

[23] See also Wach 1951, 32 and 1958, 32; Batson & Ventis 1982, 4 on studying "religion as experienced by individuals", and Rogers 1961, 23–24, 113–114, 205 on experience as a person's total state of being, and pp. 64, 80, 145–147, 156–154 on the concept of experiencing.

The attempt to decipher the meaning of these tracks with regard to the experiences of people of bygone ages involves methodological and epistemological problems, the nature of which I wish to consider on the basis of three scholarly traditions: those of hermeneutics, Wittgensteinian philosophy and cultural anthropology. In all of these the relationship between a subjective experience and its public expression has been discussed.

(1) In so-called hermeneutical philosophy the problem of understanding the meaning of a text has been given different kinds of answers. According to Emilio Betti, who follows the tradition of Schleiermacher, Droysen and Dilthey, understanding is an act where the mind of the interpreter tries to understand the mind of the author of a text.[24]

E.D. Hirsch, for his part, takes the meaning of a text to lie in its subject matter, not in the mental processes of its author. The subject matter, however, is precisely that which the author meant. Thus the meaning of a text is what the author at one time meant, and the interpreter has to decipher this meaning. Although the meaning of a text thus cannot change, its significance to people can. But meaning and significance are two different things.[25]

A completely different viewpoint is represented by Hans-Georg Gadamer who, influenced by Martin Heidegger's idea of a hermeneutical circle, takes the interpretation of a text to be essentially a conversation between the interpreter and the text[26]. Thus "(t)he horizon of understanding cannot be limited either by what the writer originally had in mind, or by the horizon of the person to whom the text was originally addressed[27]."

Understanding a text always means that one understands his or her own being in a new way in a conversation with the text. The interpreter cannot reconstruct the original meaning intended by the author because all understanding takes place in certain historical conditions and these are never the same at a certain moment, *x*, as at a previous moment, *p*. The interpreter can only understand the text's meaning as it appears to *him* or *her*.[28] Thus understanding always entails application (*Anwendung*), i.e. the interpreter integrates the text's message as part of his or her own *Seinsverständnis*[29].

For this reason, Gadamer considers it impossible to approach texts as "living expressions of the subjectivity of their writers". A text should be understood only in what it says to the reader, not as an expression of life.[30]

I think Gadamer is right in criticizing the ideal of reconstructing an original meaning. "Every interpretation has to adapt itself to the herme-

[24] Betti 1967, 42–43, 51–60, 298–300.
[25] Hirsch 1967, 1, 6–10, 247–255.
[26] Gadamer 1988, 349.
[27] Gadamer 1988, 356.
[28] Gadamer 1988, 265–267, 336–337.
[29] Gadamer 1988, 274–275, 305, 359, 364.
[30] Gadamer 1988, 354, 356.

neutical situation to which it belongs" because "(t)o interpret means precisely to use one's own preconceptions so that the meaning of the text can really be made to speak for us". "To try to eliminate one's own concepts in interpretation is not only impossible, but manifestly absurd."[31]

But it does not follow from this that the interpreter would be only a receiver of tradition, applying it to himself or herself, and would be unable to understand a text as an expression of life. We do not understand only what we are, but also what we could be but are not. This is a kind of *Seinsverständnis via negativa*. And, even though the past exists only as a construct of our (present) mind, it is nevertheless a different construct than our notion of the present in which we live, and we are able to proportion the meaning of a text to either one[32].

These two alternatives have been described by Richard Rorty as "historical" and "rational" reconstructions. In the former we proportion a philosophical text to its own historical context and evaluate it as a contribution to the discussions of its time. In doing this we are not allowed to criticize the ideas of the text on the basis of the present state of affairs. In rational reconstructions we evaluate a text as – in a sense – a timeless product, the ideas of which can be taken as contributions to the present scholarly debates. We are also allowed to criticize them on the basis of everything we now know.[33]

(2) The philosophical discussion of Ludwig Wittgenstein's so-called private language argument may also enlighten the relationship between an inner experience and its public expressions, although Wittgenstein's point of view has not received the undivided acceptance of philosophers.

The starting-point of this discussion is in the fact that, to many people an inner experience seems to be a man's most private property, and thus the only thing one can be definitely sure about because he has a sort of direct access to the depths of his own mind, where the experiences are thought to be dwelling. Accordingly, no public expressions of those experiences can express their meaning exhaustively. Only the one who experiences can know and identify his or her experience perfectly with a sort of mental private language.[34] Thus, it would be impossible to decipher exhaustively the private meaning a certain text has had to its author.

This view, however, leads to the following dilemma: if I insisted that I knew only from my own experience what the expression 'mystical unification' meant, I should admit that other people also know this from their own experience only. But how, then, could we ever generalize the expression 'mystical unification' and be sure that we are speaking about the same experience?

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[31] Gadamer 1988, 358.

[32] This criticism is presented in Knuuttila 1986, 12–14.

[33] Rorty 1984, 49–50.

[34] See Geach 1957, 18–22; Työrinoja 1984, 134–138.

Wittgenstein illustrated this with his famous parable of a beetle in a box. Suppose that everyone has in a box something they call 'beetle'. "No one can look into anyone else's box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle is only by looking at *his* beetle." But now it could very well be that everyone had a different kind of being in his box and yet they all would call it 'beetle'. All that would matter would be the common word and its common use, and the being in the box would be totally unnecessary as regards the meaning of the word.[35]

This shows the absurdity of the idea that expressions of private experiences receive their meaning from the depths of private experience. If we can be sure only about our own experiences by looking into the 'box' of our mind, we can never be sure what others experience because we cannot look into their 'box'. We would have in common only the public language that vaguely reflects various private languages that identify experiences perfectly, and fall prey to solipsism.[36]

From this it would follow that it makes no difference what people experience when they use language to describe their experiences. It is meaningful to say that people experience *something* only when it is possible that they experience something which is the *same* and that they also *mean* something which is the *same* when they describe their experiences.[37]

This means that expressions of experiences cannot have private meaning although they have private reference[38]. For instance, my experience of unrest is logically mine and not yours, and I am aware of it without observing my behavior or listening to my own accounts of my unrest. But it does not follow that I have a private meaning for the word 'unrest'. The meaning is public, although everybody has his or her own example of unrest. If someone has never felt unrest, he or she is yet able to recognize the feeling when he or she has it for the first time because he or she has learned the use of the word 'unrest'. Now, he or she would only obtain his or her own example of the experience of unrest.[39]

Thus, the study of Buddhist texts as expressions of experiences can only be meaningful if the relationship between experience and expression is taken as one of dynamic interaction: expressions are due to experiences and experiences receive meaning from expression. This means that people can be conscious of their own being-in-the-world, i.e. be human, only

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[35] Wittgenstein 1968, section 293.

[36] Työrinoja 1984, 139–140.

[37] Työrinoja 1984, 142.

[38] Geach, 1957, 3–4. Geach uses here Gottlob Frege's (1966, 41–43) distinction between meaning (*Sinn*) and reference (*Bedeutung*) that runs parallel to Rudolf Carnap's (1947, 2, 18–27, 40–41) distinction between intension and extension (See Hintikka 1973).

[39] Työrinoja 1984, 145–146. See Kerr 1986, 85–88.

as members of a sociocultural system with a shared language[40] because it is this system that makes it possible to have certain kinds of experiences, i.e. experiences with some meaning. Without the sociocultural system we would fall back to the deadlock of private experience.

If we now call to mind Hirsch's distinction between meaning and significance, we may say that although we can never catch the subjective significance Buddhist texts have had to the early Buddhists, we, nevertheless, may understand their meaning in relation to both past and present.

(3) The issue of understanding another's intentions has been discussed on the cultural level in cultural anthropology as a problem of "understanding another culture". Curiously enough, some of the philosophers who deny the possibility of a private language still hold that every culture should be understood on its own terms only, as though it had a cultural private language.

Thus, those anthropologists whose interest primarily lie in expressions often are suspicious about panhuman experiences and regard cultures as unique systems that can only be understood on their own terms[41]; and those who hold on to the primacy of experiencing are prone to postulate cross-cultural experiences that receive different expressions in different cultural contexts[42].

Both extremist positions, however, seem untenable. If we accept strict cultural relativism and each culture is considered unique to the extent that it can only be understood on its own terms, the postulating of cross-cultural experiences like the mystical ones becomes suspect and the study of foreign cultures impossible, as it of necessity presupposes understanding from the outside (cf. Gadamer). The scholar has no objective, 'transcendental' metalanguage available in which he or she could deal with other cultures without imposing measures or standards of his own culture on them.

On the other hand, we cannot generalize about our own ways of experiencing cross-culturally without taking into consideration the peculiar cultural characteristics of our sources because action receives its meaning in a concrete situation and practice. Thus, for example, spitting on somebody is an act of contempt in modern Europe but an act of blessing among the Azande[43]. This means that I have to take into consideration both the specifically *Buddhist* nature of Buddhist mysticism, and the general *mystical* nature of Buddhist mysticism.

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40 Cf. also below p. 42.

41 E.g. structural functionalist like A.R. Radcliffe–Brown (see Voget 1975, 501–512).

42 E.g. the early evolutionist anthropologists as well as the Freudians.

43 Evans-Pritchard 1967, 87.

1.2.2. Religion-phenomenological approach

My approach is not only historical but philosophical as well. The difference between these historically and philosophically oriented approaches may be expressed in the way Jacques Waardenburg has chosen to divide the hermeneutical study of religion into (1) "semantical" studies in which religions are seen as sign systems and approached as something "objective", and to (2) "phenomenological" studies in which the interest lies in religious*ness*, and religions are approached from the point of view of "subjective" religion.[44]

In trying to interpret the subjective experiences of early Buddhists on a general and abstract level, this study falls into the second category[45]. This kind of research is always to some extent "scholarly guess-work", and the meanings can be established only with "reasonable certainty"[46].

A phenomenological approach like this is valuable in that it represents a sort of crossbreeding of the points of view of Buddhists and of Western scholars[47]. Since mysticism as a phenomenon is not restricted to Buddhism, the study of Buddhist texts as expressions of mystical experiences means that not only the insider's view counts. On the contrary, the scholar as an outsider is considered to be capable of tracing "the meanings, interconnections and structures of various phenomena in the community under study" not apparent to the insiders themselves[48].

The study process proceeds as a phenomenological analysis of selected Buddhist texts in order to reveal ideological structures and interconnections relevant to the aim I have set for this study. Thus are explicated the implicit presuppositions on which the explicit statements of my sources rest. My hypothesis is that there are certain common elements which need to be explicated in all of my sources, although I do not want to deny that there are also incommensurabilities, and even contradictions. My sources certainly do not form one coherent system, but may, nevertheless, contain various, to some extent coherent subsystems.

In addition to explicating an ontological structure on an ideological level, I am also trying to bring it into relation with experiences in two senses. Firstly, I wish to evaluate what the idea of mystical experience could contribute to our understanding of Buddhism; and, secondly, I am trying to put forward an interpretation of the socio-cultural background

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[44] Waardenburg 1986, 241. Joachim Wach (1946, 1 n.3) defines phenomenology of religion simply as systematical study of religion in contradistinction to historical.

[45] On this kind of phenomenology of religion, see Waardenburg 1978, 10–12, 17–18, 92–93.

[46] Waardenburg 1978, 99.

[47] See Syrjänen 1984, 53–54.

[48] Syrjänen 1984, 54.

that influenced the birth of Buddhism by way of altering people's manner of experiencing their being-in-the-world in general.

To my mind, this kind of "structural point of view" is valuable when we investigate the birth of Buddhism, although an "institutional point of view" may be more appropriate in investigating later developments[49]. However, as it is not my intention to study how Buddhism has influenced society, this means that the relationship of Buddhism to its socio-cultural background has been considered only in connection with the birth of Buddhism, and to some extent in connection with the rise of Mahâyâna.

Taking the sociocultural background into account is advisable since experiences are usually interpreted in terms of a culturebound tradition[50]. In other words, to understand the ways of experiencing that have produced certain ideological expressions, one has to understand the sociocultural characteristics of the situation in which this has happened. This requirement is met with the help of secondary literature on Indian history, as well as of secondary sources.

As to my method, it has been said that it is "difficult to realize that there exists any special method of phenomenology of religion, in the way Heiler and other researchers postulate"[51]. On the other hand, one could call 'comparative method' "a conscious effort to form into relationships religious elements of the same type"[52].

Usually – except in so-called regional phenomenology[53] – elements of the same type are compared globally. In this study, however, the elements studied belong to one and the same religious tradition. Thus, the comparison is made between elements of Buddhist tradition and the phenomenon of mysticism as here defined. In this way the study has a certain affinity with the aforementioned regional phenomenology, although its aim is not an exhaustive morphology or typology of Buddhist experiences, but only a better understanding of the relationship between the central teachings of Buddhism and particular ways of human experiencing.

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49 From the structural point of view is investigated how society influences religion; from the institutional point of view is investigated how religion influences society (Allardt 1974, 14–21).

50 Jacques Waardenburg (1986, 222, 224) remarks that a scholar should look for connections between mystical experiences and social structure as we know that during certain historical periods there has been an apparent need for mysticism (as in western Europe that underwent a tremendous period of growth of mysticism during the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries when science, politics, literature and art had reached their zenith and a new kind of individualism was born, culminating in the Reformation [see Underhill 1923, 541ff.]).

51 Hultkrantz 1970, 83–84.

52 Hultkrantz 1970, 84.

53 See Hultkrantz 1973, 87–88.

1.3. Previous Studies on Mysticism

1.3.1. 'Mysticism' as a concept

In Buddhist texts, there is no such *concept* as 'mysticism'. This, however, does not necessarily exclude mysticism from Buddhism. On the contrary, we may put forward a hypothesis that if Buddhism is essentially mysticism, then the Buddhists have had no need to distinguish conceptually between mysticism and non-mysticism, and consequently no concept of mysticism has been formed[54]. The Sanskrit word which comes closest to 'mysticism' in meaning, is '*samâdhi*' (concentration), which refers to meditation and the related states of mind[55].

The word 'mysticism' is derived from the Greek '*myo*' meaning 'to close' (the eyes or lips)[56]. Derived words like '*mystikos*' and '*mysterion*' were originally used in the mystery cults whose members were supposed to remain silent about the secret rites of initiation (and not of any doctrines). Only later, in the Neoplatonic theory, mystical silence came to mean wordless contemplation instead.[57]

Sometime between the fourth and the fifth centuries the new, Christian meaning of 'mysticism' began to absorb the earlier connotations of silence and secrecy. For the early Christians, 'mystical' referred to the special meaning of the Scriptures they detected under the literal meaning.[58]

In the 5th century, Pseudo-Dionysios, or Dionysios the Areopagite, took the mystical theory to consist of the spiritual awareness of the ineffable Absolute, beyond the "theology of divine names". This, however, was an awareness of the Christian *community*. It was only St. Augustine who finally stressed the purely subjective nature of mystical awareness.[59]

This is what scholars now usually understand to be mysticism, viz. special kinds of subjective experiences with various interpretations in various religious traditions. By the same token, 'mysticism' has, despite its particular religious roots, become a scholarly concept widely used in historical, psychological and phenomenological studies of religion[60]. Thus,

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54 And, in the history of Buddhism, we know of no instances of mystics being suspected of heresy, not to mention persecution, contrary to some other religions.

55 See Rhys Davids & Stede 1972, 685; Conze 1975, 100–105, and below pp. 100–102.

56 Cf. how *Asaṅga* describes (p. 131 below) a typical mystical experience with the expression *nimiñjitacakṣus* ('with eyes closed').

57 Bouyer 1981, 43; Braarvig 1987; Dupré 1987, 245.

58 Bouyer 1981, 45–47; Dupré 1987, 245–246.

59 Bouyer 1981, 51; Dupré 1987, 246.

60 e.g. James 1971, 366–413; Staal 1975; Sundén 1977, 40–73; Lanczkowski 1978, 89–91; Brown 1988, 87–94.

'mysticism' refers to a special phenomenon inside religion – as well as outside religion according to some.

Mysticism is sometimes more or less equated with religious experience in general[61], but my conception of experience[62] does not justify this. When experience is viewed as a category broader than mere feeling, religious experience should also be so understood. Thus, religious experience is the religiously[63] interpreted totality of feelings, thoughts, intentional attitudes and other possible forms of conscious life, through which a person realizes his or her position in the world. Mystical experiences are only one of these categories.

1.3.2 Psychological interpretations of mystical experience

From William James to altered states of consciousness

The pioneer of the psychology of religion, William James, ascribed four characteristics to mystical experience: 1) It was ineffable to the extent that no adequate verbal expression could be given to it; 2) it had a noetic quality, i.e. it yielded knowledge that, however, was not dependent on discursive thought; 3) it was transient and could not be sustained for long; and 4) "when the characteristic sort of consciousness once has set in, the mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance."[64]

During the 60's the psychological study of mysticism entered a new phase when, for example, the study of meditation was initiated as an investigation of the claims of some yogis to be able to induce physiological changes by meditation[65]. A number of important articles were collected and published in 1969 by Charles T. Tart[66] who named his subject matter "altered states of consciousness".

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[61] e.g. Brown 1988, 87–94.

[62] See above p. 18.

[63] What I've said about defining Buddhism (above pp. 14–15), also applies to religion in general, i.e. I share Comstock's (1984) preference for open definitions of religion. 'Religion' refers to a "polythetic" class, the members of which don't have to share *all* the attributes that characterize the class, unlike in "monothetic" classes where all members of the class are in possession of the same set of attributes (see Southwold 1978, 369, 376; Comstock 1984, 512).

[64] James 1971, 367–368. Philip Almond (1982, 128–138), basing his statements on Katz 1978, 48–49, criticizes James, saying that this list is partly too inclusive and partly too exclusive, and that there is no such unanimity about mystical utterance that would point towards the unanimity of mystical experience.

[65] Walsh 1979, 161. A useful guide to meditation research is Jarrell 1985.

[66] Tart 1969a.

"An altered state of consciousness for a given individual", he wrote, "is one in which he clearly feels a *qualitative* shift in his pattern of mental functioning, that is, he feels not just a quantative shift (more or less alert, more or less visual imagery, sharper or duller, etc.), but also that some quality or qualities of his mental processes are *different*."[67]

In one of the articles in Tart's book, Arthur Deikman presented a psychological model of the mystical experience based on the assumption that meditation and renunciation were the primary techniques by which it was produced. This process of production he conceptualized as "deautomatization".[68] He wrote:

> A mystic experience is the production of an unusual state of consciousness. This state is brought about by a deautomatization of hierarchically ordered structures that ordinarily conserve attentional energy for maximum efficiency in achieving the basic goals of the individual: biological survival as an organism and psychological survival as a personality.[69]

Although it was hard to find evidence of how mystics experienced the external world, as their orientation was inward and they spoke about God rather than nature, the experienced unity could be taken to mean a dedifferentiation that merged all boundaries until the self was no longer experienced as a separate object, and customary perceptual and cognitive distinctions were neither any longer applicable.[70]

This experience was reached by meditation – or 'contemplation' – which meant to Deikman "a nonanalytic apprehension of an object or idea – nonanalytic because discursive thought is banished and the attempt is made to empty the mind of everything except the percept of the object in question."[71] This resulted in "a *deautomatization* of the psychological structures that organize, limit, select, and interpret perceptual stimuli," to an "undoing of automatization, presumably by *reinvesting actions and percepts with attention*."[72]

In contemplation, the percept receives attention while categorization and thought are prohibited. This "undoing of automatic perceptual and cognitive structures permits a gain in sensory intensity and richness at the expense of abstract categorization and differentiation." However, sometimes a new vision takes place, as if everything is seen for the first time.[73] Besides unity, mystical experience had four other principal features: intense

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[67] Tart 1969b, 1.
[68] Deikman 1969, 24. See Ornstein 1978, 150–157.
[69] Deikman 1969, 42–43.
[70] Deikman 1969, 32.
[71] Deikman 1969, 27.
[72] Deikman 1969, 30–31.
[73] Deikman 1969, 31–34.

reality, unusual sensations, ineffability[74], and trans-sensate phenomena, i.e. perceptual experiences that do not include sensations of warmth, sweetness, visions etc. but go "*beyond* the customary sensory pathways, ideas, and memories."[75] These findings are based on empirical experiments with ordinary people practicing meditation for short periods.

This kind of approach to mystical experience is based in the findings of the psychology of perception and *gestalt* psychology, the latter one being a reaction against atomistic approaches in psychology. Its major emphasis has been the part-whole relationship, exemplified by perceptual phenomena: Our perceptions are not constituted of isolated elements, but of organized units or wholes. Thus, when looking at a building, we do not see only bricks, lumber and glass, but a house.[76] A completely different kind of approach to mysticism has been adopted by the leading figure of the Scandinavian psychology of religion, Hjalmar Sundén, who bases his theory on physiology, attempting to find a direct and atomistic relationship between perceptions and physiological reactions. This is somewhat surprising as he has previously also applied the psychology of perception[77].

Hjalmar Sundén and Pavlov's theory of conditioned responses

In 1966, Hjalmar Sundén wrote that Ivan Pavlov's experiments with dogs provided us with new opportunities to understand mystical experiences in *Zen*, appealing to Heinrich Dumoulin and Hugo Enomiya-Lassalle that they would seriously consider his ideas[78]. The function of *kôans* is, according to Sundén, "quite clear" in light of Pavlov's idea of the three phases of brain function under stress[79].

Pavlov found out that prolonged stress produces in dogs three phases of increasingly abnormal behavior. In the "equivalent phase", the brain responds similarly to both strong and weak stimuli; in the "paradoxical phase", the brain responds more actively to weak stimuli than to strong;

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[74] Deikman (1969, 23) even wrote that such "experience is called mystical *because* it is considered beyond the scope of language to convey (my italics)."

[75] Deikman 1969, 35, 42. Moreover, typical of all mystical experience was its gradual fading away (Deikman 1969, 25), as James also held.

[76] Shaw & Costanzo 1970, 117.

[77] Sundén 1959.

[78] Sundén 1966, 195. As far as I know, this has not happened. Later, Sundén has written that he realized in the sixties that what he had "learned about Zen must be seen in the light of Pavlov's three phases (1990, 117)". Besides *Zen*, Sundén has applied Pavlov's ideas to the writings of Saint John of the Cross (Sundén 1966, 196; 1977, 66–73; 1990).

[79] Sundén 1990, 117.

and in the "ultraparadoxical phase" conditioned responses and behavior patterns turn from positive to negative, and vice versa.[80]

Sundén does not describe at any length Pavlov's experiments and theory, which he presents only on the basis of William Sargant's book "Battle for the Mind", discussing "brain washing"[81]. Sargant's purpose was "to show how beliefs, whether good or bad, false or true, can be forcibly implanted in the human *brain*". In practice, his approach was purely physiological and mechanistic, although he did not, in principle, deny the value of other kinds of approaches, such as a philosophical approach.[82]

Sundén is of the opinion that Sargant has shown Pavlov's experiments to be relevant with regard to human behavior as well[83], and seems to think that on the basis of Pavlov's experiments we are able to bring the cognitive processes of a mystic into relationship with his brain function[84]. It is, however, not very clear what exactly Sundén means by the three phases: Are they states of brain function[85] and in what sense, abstract patterns of behavior[86], or cognitive structures[87]?

Nevertheless, Sundén thinks that mystical experiences are to some extent explicable through the functions of the nervous system[88], although they also contain a "cosmic secret" which remains out of the reach of nerve physiological explanations[89]. This latter formulation seems to be related

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80 Sundén 1966, 193; 1967, 116; 1990, 116–117. See also Sundén 1977, 69. Cf. Sargant 1957, 1–20.

81 Sargant 1957.

82 Sargant 1957, xxiv, 232 (my italics). In saying that beliefs are in the brain, one confuses two phenomena of a logically distinct type. Beliefs are no more in the brain than walking is in the legs, although the brain is necessary for anyone to be able to believe.

83 Sundén 1967, 116. Cf. Sargant 1957, 21–41.

84 e.g. Sundén 1990, 117: "When, for instace, it is reported that the faint sound of snow falling against a paper-window could suddenly trigger a synthesis of what the master had pondered over for decades, this could be seen as a case where the brain responds more actively to weak stimuli than to strong."

85 Sundén 1966, 194: "... dass das Gehirn in die ultraparadoxale Phase versetzt wird ..."

86 Sundén 1990, 117: "... three distinguishable phases of increasingly abnormal behavior ..."

87 Sundén 1966, 194: "Die umschaltung von Positiv auf Negativ von Negativ auf Positiv gilt natürlich aber nicht nur für die Bedingungen der Etikette, sondern auch für sprachliche und intellektuelle Bedingungen." Also Sundén 1967, 118.

88 Sundén 1966, 193: "Fragen wir, was für Wirkungen auf das Nervensystem des Menschen ein solcher Zustand mit sich bringt, dann tut sich eine interessante Perspektive über koân [*sic*!] übung und die ganze Zenerfahrung auf." Sundén 1966, 195: "Diese Hypothese richtet auch unsere Aufmerksamkeit auf die Bedingungen, die vorher in seinem Nervensystem vorhanden sein müssen."

89 Sundén 1966, 196: "Das Zen-Geheimnis ist nicht nur etwas, was mit dem Funktionieren unseres Nervensystems zu tun hat, sondern auch ein kosmisches Geheimnis." Also 1967, 120.

to Sundén's view of religion as man's relationship to the cosmos as a totality[90]. In religious experience, the world of diversity is transformed into a Totality that is referred to as God by Christians, as Buddha by Buddhists, etc.[91]

Thus, Sundén rejects coarse reductionism[92], and says that the idea of an ultraparadoxical phase cannot explain the nature of the conditions preceding enlightenment. The liberating enlightenment is attainable only because the Buddhist knows certain models of behavior and perception, as well as certain roles which are embodied in the Buddhist tradition. Were this not so, the person could fall prey to schizophrenia or to other destructive forms of behavior.[93]

On the other hand, Sundén says that in *Zen* enlightenment *the brain* is shifted to the ultraparadoxical phase[94]. *Kôan* exercise, based on paradoxical riddles, impossible for the practitioner to solve intellectually, induces an over-excitation of the brain, which then leads to the ultraparadoxical phase and, by the same token, to *satori*. The content of the *satori* is, according to Sundén, that one's "response to life as a whole is turned from negative to positive." The Buddhist, who previously regarded life as suffering *(duḥkha)*, now sees it as joyful.[95]

Unfortunately Sundén has not tried to show in any detail how the practitioner of *Zen* proceeds from the equivalent phase via the paradoxical to the ultraparadoxical. Moreover, Pavlov's model cannot provide a comprehensive account of the results of *kôan* practice. Sundén himself acknowledges that *kôan* meditation does not only lead to the ultraparadoxical phase, but "also allows one to complete the subconscious processes, undisturbed by conscious activity, i.e. verbal stimulation"[96].

This Sundén's latter formulation is compatible with Deikman's idea of deautomatization[97], the "undoing of automatic perceptual and cognitive structures" that permit "a gain in sensory intensity and richness at the expense of abstract categorization and differentiation." The strong reactions to weak stimuli, that typify the paradoxical phase, are explained quite well by techniques of deautomatization.

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90 Sundén 1966, 196: "Religion ist die Relation des Menschen zum Kosmos als Totalität." Also 1967, 120.

91 Sundén 1966, 196.

92 Sundén 1967, 119: "Att rekna med hjärna och nervsystem, då det gäller människans religion, är ingalunda detsamma som billig reduktionism, men det möjliggör en terminologi, som tillåter oss att föra forskningen framåt."

93 Sundén 1966, 195; 1967, 119.

94 Sundén 1966, 194–195; 1990, 117. My italics.

95 Sundén 1966, 195; 1967, 118; 1990, 117.

96 Sundén 1967, 121: "Den tillåter även omedvetandeprocesser att fullbordas ostörda av medveten verksamhet, dvs. språklig stimulering."

97 Sundén's account of deautomatization and automatization is found in Sundén 1977, 53–57.

Further, the way Sundén tries to reconcile Pavlov's findings and his own conception of religion seems to me rather artificial. He explains that when in mystical experience the diversity of reality is transformed into unity, this signifies the ultraparadoxical phase in the sense that the unity which was previously considered "incomprehensible", "foolish" and thus as something negative, becomes now something natural and positive[98].

This artificiality is not surprising, as Pavlov did not study human consciousness, thought or emotion. His theories (beside Thorndike's connectionism and Bechterev's objectivism) have laid the groundwork for American behaviorism, but he was above all a physiologist seeking neurological explanations for the digestive process. His three phase model is a non-intentional and mechanistic model of a process of stimulus and reaction.[99] As such, it may be a convenient tool for Sargant, who wants to explain the possibility of "brainwashing". But it is not so convenient a tool, when one wants to understand what happens when somedy is *actively and purposively* involved in the practice of *kôan* meditation.

This is reflected in the fact that Sundén does not directly ask what is the *raison d'être* of meditation, although one gets the impression that Sundén thinks meditation helps to turn negative attitudes into positive ones. However, this is not so simple since the ultraparadoxical phase also entails the shift that positive attitudes change to negative. Pavlov's findings concerned behavior and brain physiology, and consequently Sundén's implicit tendency to generalize Pavlov's findings to cover cognitive structures and information processing as well, is more confusing than enlightening.

1.3.3. Unity with the Absolute or with the world?

The unity that characterizes mystical experience has been interpreted by scholars either as unity with the external world or with the Absolute. It is, however, not always clear whether 'world' and 'Absolute' are used as explanatory concepts or concepts in need of explanation. In other words, we should always make it clear whether an explanation of the unifying experience is made from the point of view of a "believer", or from that of a scholar.

Thus, William James wrote that the mystic achievement meant the "overcoming of all the usual barriers between the individual and the Absol-

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98 Sundén 1967, 118–119: "Därtill kommer att enhetsupplevelsen, som för de flesta människor ter sig ofattbar, ja rentav löjlig, som någonting obegripligt negativt alltså, då omslaget sker kommer att te sig som det naturliga sättet att uppleva, under det att uppfattningen av mångfald kommer att te sig om den onda dröm vi mötte framställd i Tetsugens predikan."

99 Shaw & Costanzo 1970, 23–26.

ute". The mystic "becomes one with the Absolute" as well as aware of this oneness.[100] Here 'Absolute' must be taken to refer to that something which the believer regards as the absolute reality, and the precise nature of this unity is, by the same token, left unexplained. James only says that a mystic experiences something that he or she describes or explains as unity with the Absolute.

James H. Leuba was a bit more precise when he wrote that the term 'mystical' meant "any experience taken by the experiencer to be a contact (not through the senses, but 'immediate,' 'intuitive') or union of the self with a larger-than-self, be it called the World-Spirit, God, the Absolute, or otherwise."[101] Leuba must have taken this contact to mean a particular way of experiencing the external world because the mystic was said to seek "intercourse with God *in the disappearance of diversity*, in the peace of utter surrender, in excruciating delights, in a sense of freedom and illumination", and because the mystic was judged to be mistaken in his or her interpretation of the mystical experience as "these experiences reveal not the Christian God, but the lawful workings of our psycho-physiological organisms"[102].

Thus Leuba could acknowledge that the only difference between religious and non-religious "ecstasies" was in the subsequent interpretation and that the interpretative frame of reference had effects on the experience itself.[103] However, he made a distinction between real mysticism and "moderate" mysticism when he wrote that mystics suffered from "nervous disorders, and perhaps hysteria", but "the moderate mysticism, common in the rank and file of worshippers of almost every Christian sect, is entirely free from that disease."[104]

According to Deikman, the "hallmark" of mystical experience was "(e)xperiencing one's self as one with the universe or with God ... regardless of ... cultural context"[105]. This unity could be interpreted either as perception of one's own psychic structure or of the real structure of the world[106], and God and the unconscious shared "equal possibilities" as explanations of the mystical experience. Thus, one's interpretation would always reflect his or her own presuppositions and beliefs[107].

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[100] James 1971, 404. From the logical point of view one might, however, remark that as long as I can identify myself as the one who is one with the Absolute, I am not entirely one with the Absolute.

[101] Leuba 1925, 1.

[102] Leuba 1925, 316 (my italics).

[103] Leuba 1925, 315. Cf. Brown 1988, 90: "... what some people identify as a 'religious' experience others describe as aesthetic, or simply as having had a 'good time'."

[104] Leuba 1925, 191.

[105] Deikman 1969, 38.

[106] Deikman 1969, 39.

[107] Deikman 1969, 43.

Nils G. Holm makes no differentiation between unity with the world and unity with the Absolute. Holm first describes typical mystical experiences to be "an awareness of unity with the divine or supernatural, a distant reality"[108]. A little later he continues that mystical experience "often includes an insight into the 'true essence' of the *world, God's being*, as well as an ascent into totality, into God or whatever the specific religious tradition calls the highest or most central experience in existence."[109] So, from Holm's point of view, the experience of unity is explicable in terms of psychology, while the "believers" of various traditions themselves interpret it as unity either with the world or God etc.

Thus, psychologists seem to hold that all mystical experiences are similar in their psychophysiological structure (whatever that might be) and that only subsequent interpretations differentiate them.

1.3.4. Interpretations of mystical experiences

The universal sameness of mystical experience is accepted by e.g. Rudolf Otto, Ninian Smart, W.T. Stace and Louis Dupré. For Otto, there was only one form of interior mystical experience, despite the differences in its outward manifestations[110], and mystical ontology was centered "on an intuition of a 'hidden' unity that underlies the 'evident' multiplicity of ordinary experience"[111]. This unity, the Being (*Sein*), is the "source" of all beings.[112] Thus Otto could, for instance, identify Meister Eckhart's view of oneness with the Mahâyâna Buddhist enlightenment where *saṁsâra* is seen to be nirvâṇa and vice versa[113].

To Smart, "a mystic of one religion and some mystic of another faith can have what is substantially a similar experience"[114], and the differences in expressions or interpretations are due to the ramifying effect of various doctrinal schemes[115]. Dupré is even more explicit in writing that "only subsequent interpretations distinguish one mysticism from another"[116].

Also according to W.T. Stace, the unitive mystical experience is everywhere the same, the differences being only in interpretation.[117] There are, however, two basic types of mystical experience, the introvertive and the

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108 Holm 1987, 34.

109 Holm 1987, 56 (my italics).

110 See Almond 1982, 92–122.

111 Mitchell 1985, 67.

112 Otto 1929, 22–37; Mitchell 1985, 67.

113 Otto 1929, 294. Mitchell 1985, 76: "I think it should now be clear that in both Christianity and Buddhism an important 'way' of cultivating a mystical vision of the Unity behind multiplicity is through a type of non-attachment referred to by Eckhart as 'poverty' and by Mahâyâna as 'Emptiness'."

114 Smart 1965, 78.

115 See Almond 1982, 48, 63.

116 Dupré 1987, 246.

117 Stace 1961, 18, 66.

extrovertive. Yet "extrovertive" mysticism is to Stace only an incomplete form of "introvertive" mysticism where space and time are finally transcended[118]. The extrovertive experiences were spontaneous experiences that look "outward through the senses, while the introvertive looks inward into the mind." However, both "culminate in the perception of an ultimate Unity ... with which the perceiver realizes his own union or even identity." In the extrovertive experience, the external world is transfigured so that "the One" shines through. In the introvertive experience, one closes the senses and dives inwards to his or her own self and finds "the One" there.[119]

The empty consciousness of the introvertive experience does not mean unconsciousness but "pure consciousness – 'pure' in the sense that it is not consciousness *of* any empirical content." Its only content is consciousness itself, that is to say, void, nothingness, the One, the Infinite, undifferentiated unity. This experience is the same in all cultures and all religions.[120]

To those who regard human consciousness as essentially intentional (like Sartre), this pure consciousness would have been an impossibility, but Stace defends his case by appealing to states like deep hypnosis and somnambulism where the agent responds to stimuli without being conscious of them. Thus, he or she is not unconscious although there is good reason to believe that his or her consciousness has no empirical content.[121]

A distinction similar to Stace's introvertive-extrovertive is made by Walter Pahnke and William Richards[122]. They wrote:

> Internal unity reportedly occurs in the following manner: Awareness of all normal sense impressions ... c[e]ases, and the empirical ego (i.e. the usual sense of individuality) seems to die or fade away while pure consciousness of what is being experienced paradoxically remains and seems to expand as a vast inner world encountered. ... Internal unity occurs when consciousness merges with this 'ground of being', beyond all empirical distinctions. Although awareness of one's empirical ego has ceased, one does not become unconscious.[123]

The external unity meant that:

> Awareness of one or more particular sense impressions grows in intensity until suddenly the object of perception and the empirical ego simultaneously seem to cease to exist as separate entities, while consciousness seems to transcend subject and object and become impregnated by a profound sense of unity, accompanied by the insight that ultimately 'all is One'."[124]

118 Stace 1961, 131–132.
119 Stace 1961, 60–62.
120 Stace 1961, 86, 110.
121 Stace 1961, 130.
122 Pahnke & Richards 1969, 401.
123 Ibid.
124 Pahnke & Richards 1969, 402.

This distinction is also made by Philip Almond. According to him, we firstly have "experiences in which the world of everyday experience is perceived as having an all-embracing unity or coherence or oneness about it." From this experience springs a belief that "what had previously seemed merely disparate, multiple, and unconnected is *really* a unified whole."[125]

Secondly, "we have experiences which do not involve public phenomena at all, where the world is, so to speak, 'bracketed out', and which takes place 'within' the individual." Such experiences arise as a result of following particular contemplative or meditative paths.[126]

Contrary to the above described views, R.C. Zaehner based his typology of mysticism on a distinction between unity with the world and unity with the Absolute, supplemented by a distinction between monism and theism. Thus, there were three different kinds of mystical experiences: the pan-en-henic, the isolation of the 'self', and the return of the 'self' to God[127].

"*Pan-en-henism*" ("all-is-one-ism") or "nature mysticism" refers to experiences where space and time are transcended and one experiences all creaturely existence as one, and one as all. This is clearly expressed, for instance, in the *Kauṣîtakî Upaniṣad* I.6 where it is said: "You are this all (*idam sarvam asi*)".[128]

Whereas a nature mystic thus concentrates upon the phenomenal world, a religious mystic contemplates the ultimate reality to the exclusion of all else. The state of isolation of the uncreated soul from all that is other than itself belongs to *monistic* religious mysticism like *Vedânta* where only the Absolute really exists. In a monistic mystical experience one feels his or her soul is unified with the Absolute so that the phenomenal world is no longer experienced.[129]

Another type of religious mysticism is *theistic*, in which man feels his or her soul to be united with God by love. God, however, is felt to be so incomparably greater than man that a total fusion with God and annihilation of the human soul can never take place. A theistic mystic takes God to be the one who takes the first step and makes a man's soul fit for union, which means direct apprehension of God but not merging with God. In Zaehner's opinion, a person's "humility" and "the holiness of his life" are criteria that "enable us to distinguish between the genuine state of union with God" and "natural mystical experience".[130]

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125 Almond 1982, 7.

126 Almond 1982, 7–8. Stace's and Almond's distinction between extrovertive and introvertive experience is accepted in Marcoulesco 1987, 240.

127 Zaehner 1961, 168.

128 Zaehner 1961, 28, 41, 50, 168.

129 Zaehner 1961, 28–29, 33, 168.

130 Zaehner 1961, 29, 31–32, 168, 172–175, 192–193.

However, Zaehner later seems to have regarded the monistic mystical experience as a development of the pan-en-henic experience[131]. On the other hand, the distinction between monism and theism is not one between experiences but one between interpretations[132]. And, as Stace noted, Christian mystics clearly describe their experiences to be experiences of unity, but nevertheless hastily add that there still is no question of the soul wholly passing away into God[133].

1.4. Locating Mysticism

1.4.1. Being-in-the-world and language

The logical starting point of this study is that man always experiences his or her being-in-the-world in one way or another, and that these experiences are usually structured and given meaning through the medium of language in the sense Heidegger and Gadamer have suggested. My aim, however, is to show that mystical experiences may count as an exception to the linguistic quality of man's being-in-the-world.

The common structure of experience is dualistic, there being both the one who experiences and that which is experienced. The one who experiences is conceived of as an 'I' and that which is experienced is some particular instance of one's being-in-the-world.

Thus man experiences himself or herself to be at one and the same time a part of the external world and separate from it. He or she is by essence conscious of himself or herself as a conscious being, but only through the fact that he or she is conscious of the world in which he or she is, and which is experienced as different from the experiencing subject. One can understand his or her being only as a being-in-the-world.[134] In other words, one cannot be conscious of his or her consciousness as such, but only of its contents[135].

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131 Almond 1982, 34–36. This recalls Stace's view of the relationship between introvertive and extrovertive experiences, although Zaehner, quite contrary to Stace, regards the transcending of space and time as a characteristic of the lowest form of mysticism, the pan-en-henic nature mysticism (Zaehner 1961, 41).

132 Stace (1961, 35–36) notes that Zaehner ignores this latter distinction.

133 Stace 1961, 114. Loy (1988, 295) turns Zaehner's argument around and suggests that the theistically interpreted experience might be an incomplete nondual experience.

134 Heidegger 1987, 19–34, 78–80, 138 (1941, 1–13, 53–54, 104). Sartre 1978, 13; 1943, e.g. 16–34, 115–121, 220–228, 275–368. Mead 1967, 163–166. See Pyysiäinen 1988, 91–92 and Karl Löwith's (1967, 41–69) discussion of the Cartesian inheritance of Husserl, Heidegger, Valéry and Sartre.

135 See Woodhouse 1990, 267.

This understanding of one's being-in-the-world takes place "proximally and for the most part", through the medium of language as emphasized by Heidegger and Gadamer[136]. To Heidegger, however, the logical starting point is silence[137]. From silence man then emerges as man, the only being that speaks[138] and thus is able to discover the world as well as himself in a peculiarly human way[139]. Language becomes "the house of being"[140]. Discourse (*Rede*), as the foundation of language, is equiprimordial with the two other basic characteristics of being, "state-of-mind" and "understanding"[141], and is constitutive of man's existence as man (*Dasein*) because in it the human reality is disclosed[142].

To Gadamer, language occupies a central position in the process of understanding, as man is always under the influence of tradition existing in language. This tradition is not just something "left over" to be investigated as a remnant of the past, but something that has literally been "handed down" to us, and in whose elements we find our own being.[143]

Thus, Gadamer can say that Humboldt's real contribution to hermeneutics lies in showing "that a view of language is a view of the world." The world always shows itself to us in language, so that it is not possible to set a particular view of the world, inherent in a language, against the world in itself. "(T)he world is not different from the views in which it presents itself."[144]

Under these circumstances, it is not possible to consider language as only one of man's possessions in the world. On the contrary, the fact that man has a world at all depends on language. The world presents itself precisely in language, and "(w)hoever has language 'has' the world."[145] Man's being-in-the-world has fundamentally a linguistic quality, and "(w)hen a person lives in a language, he is filled with the sense of the unsurpassable appropriateness of the words that he uses for the objects to which he is referring." "(L)anguage is a central point where 'I' and world meet or, rather, manifest their original unity."[146]

It may be granted that people mostly experience their being-in-the-world dualistically (experiencer-experienced) and that this experiencing

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[136] Rothberg 1990, 173.

[137] Heidegger 1985, 27: "Die Sprache spricht als das Geläut der Stille. Die Stille stillt, indem sie Welt und Dinge in ihr Wesen austrägt." See Kotoh 1987, 204.

[138] Heidegger 1985, 9, 27; 1987, 208 (1941, 165).

[139] Heidegger 1987, 204, 208–209 (1941, 161, 165).

[140] Heidegger 1985, 156. On Western and East Asian languages as "houses of Being", see Parkes 1990.

[141] Heidegger 1987, 203 (1941, 160).

[142] Heidegger 1987, 204 (1941, 161).

[143] Gadamer 1988, 351, 420.

[144] Gadamer 1988, 401, 405–406.

[145] Gadamer 1988, 401, 408, 411.

[146] Gadamer 1988, 363, 401, 431.

has a linguistic basis. However, the question which remains is whether mysticism could be understood as an art of silence meant to restore man to a prelinguistic "pure experience" not mediated by conceptual categories[147].

1.4.2. The world, 'self' and emptiness

To describe mystical experience as ineffable or silent is to continue to approach mysticism from the point of view of language and auditory experience. There is, however, another way of approaching mysticism that is especially important with regard to Buddhism, namely through the concept of emptiness.

Emptiness in this sense is another kind of representation of the silent experience and is more related to visual experience. It is also essentially related to the ideas of inside and outside, inwardness and outwardness, particularly as they apply to the relationship between man and the world. I shall, in what follows, try to present two mutually exclusive ways of understanding the nature of the 'self' and of its relationship with the world in terms of the ideas of internality and externality.

As one can be conscious of himself or herself only by being conscious of the world, the 'I' seems to dissolve into the surrounding world. An individual and the world belong essentially together, like two sides of a coin, and thus are not, strictly speaking, subject and object[148]. 'I' am not just 'I think' but 'I think something', and thus I can only understand my being as a being-in-the-world[149]. As the self becomes in this way merged to the eternal flux of the world, there is no place left for a substantial self beneath the various states of being.[150]

From a social-psychological point of view, the self then is a social product receiving its unity from a social group displaying certain attitudes towards a person; and self-consciousness is accordingly consciousness of the attitudes one arouses in others[151]. I am what I am not because of some metaphysical fact but because of the social practices in which I grew up and the language I learned[152].

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[147] See also Kotoh 1987, 206–207.

[148] Heidegger 1941, 60, 116. Sartre 1978, 13. Merleau-Ponty 1945, v: "Le monde n'est pas un objet ..., il est le milieu naturel et le champ de toutes mes pénsees et de toutes mes perceptions explicites. La vérité n'"habite" pas seulement l'"homme intérieur", ou plutôt il n'y a pas d'homme intérieur, l'homme est au monde, c'est dans le monde qu'il se connait."

[149] Heidegger 1987, 367 (1941, 321).

[150] See Trigg 1988, 280–281.

[151] Mead 1967, 135, 140, 154–158, 163.

[152] See Trigg 1988, 287. Sartre 1943, 292: "So the 'moment' Hegel called *being for others* is a necessary phase in the development of the consciousness of self. The way of interiority proceeds through the other."

The philosophical conclusion is that human existence is a series of discrete acts leading nowhere and having no preconceived plot whatsoever[153]. There cannot be any overall meaning for my life because 'my life' is only a fiction abstracted from a series of overlapping experiences not united by any common principle[154]. According to Sartre, for instance, the notion of a substantial and internal ego as an 'owner' of consciousness is illusory. Instead, the pre-reflective consciousness constitutes itself as a sort of ego only in its reflective acts. The so-called ego is only an ideal and indirect unity of the infinite series of reflected consciousnesses. Because consciousness is in this way *empty*, man's essence is nothingness and absolute freedom.[155]

But the fact that man can be conscious of himself or herself only by being conscious of the external world causes bewilderment and suffering to some people[156]. Sartre calls this quality of man's being-in-the-world "unhappy consciousness". He writes:

> The human reality is suffering in its very being because it arises as a being that is constantly haunted by a totality that it is [= the external world] without being capable of being it. This is precisely because it cannot reach the in-itself [= external world] without losing itself as a for-itself [= the human reality].[157]

Thus, one may ask: Who am I when all my beliefs and perceptions are peeled off; who am I as an I, as an inner me, independent of the external world?[158] Perhaps the most famous thinker to ask these questions was René Descartes who arrived at the result that his essence was a pure thinking mind.[159] Everything he thought could be doubted except the fact that he thought. Hence the logically unwarranted conclusion "I think, therefore I am"[160], which Descartes, in the words of Bishop Temple, made when "having no claims to meet, remained for a whole day 'shut up alone in a stove'"[161].

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153 See MacIntyre 1982, 190–191, 199.

154 See Trigg 1988, 285.

155 Sartre 1978, 13, 30–37, 43–44, 77; 1943, 71, 82–85.

156 David Loy (1986, 17) puts this as follows: "(T)he basic anxiety (*duḥkha*) of our lives can be expressed in terms of the contradiction between permanence and impermanence: on the other hand, we somehow *feel* that we are immortal and timeless, yet we are also all too aware of our inescapable temporality ..."

157 Sartre 1943, 134 (additions in brackets by I.P.).

158 See Trigg 1988, 281.

159 See Kerr 1986, 3–4.

160 Descartes 1963, 603: "Et remarquant que cette vérité: *je pense, donc je suis*, était si ferme et si assurée, que toutes les plus extravagantes suppositions des sceptiques n'étaient pas capables de l'ébranler, je jugeai que je pouvais la recevoir, sans scrupule, pour le premier principle de la philosophie que je cherchais." Cf. Loy 1988, 138.

161 Cited in Bowman 1974, 45.

But if Heidegger's and Sartre's views are accepted, it becomes clear that a prolonged search for an *inner* 'self' that would be independent of all *external* 'worldly' attributes cannot lead to anything other than an experience of a peculiar *emptiness*. Behind my social roles and physical appearance there seems to lurk a nothingness that may be experienced as threatening because it seems to imply that *I* do not exist.

In the Cartesian line of thought it is reasoned that as subject (I) cannot be absorbed into object (world), the uniqueness of each individual transcends all physical and social contexts and no amount of such 'worldly' attributes will suffice as an answer to the question 'who am I?' They are totally unsatisfactory to one who experiences himself as distinct from the transitory world into which he has 'fallen'. It is thought to be an altogether different issue to *be* me than to *recognize* me. The way you pick me out does not form an exhaustive description of me because my 'true self' is not accessible to public observation.[162]

When the self is thus conceived of as a unique substance, it is usually regarded as a metaphysical entity, a soul that is not of this world and that requires a transcendent God as its macrocosmic counterpart[163]. This was also Descartes' conclusion. According to him, his clear and distinct ideas and notions concerning the external world were, after all, as sure as his own existence because they came from God, and God could not be deliberately cheating man[164]. In this way, God was to Descartes a way of escaping from the deadlock of solipsism[165]. About seventy years later, Georg Berkeley wrote that to exist is the same as to be perceived, and hastened to add that the world existed objectively since it was constantly perceived by God[166]. To Descartes, the existence of God was thus "the first and most eternal of all possible truths". God was the "source and founda-

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162 Trigg 1988, 277, 282, 288. Loy's study on "nonduality" (1988) is based on the claim that several Asian philosophical systems hold "that the true nature of reality is nondual (p. 178)." This "'core doctrine' of non–duality (p. 9)" takes the dualistic experience (or interpretation) to be "both delusive and unsatisfactory (p. 18)."

163 Trigg 1988, 285, 288. According to Sartre (1943, 707–708), man tries in vain to combine the external world or being-in-itself and the human reality or being-for-itself in the idea of God who on one hand is the basis of his own existence and the existence of the world as though he were a being-in-itself, and on the other he is conscious as though he were a being-for-itself.

Loy (1986, 17–18) remarks that when time is conceived of as a self-existent stream of moments, all objects tend to be regarded as atemporal entities in time – like things in a container – and that the first thing to be so understood is the self.

164 Descartes 1963, 605–611 and 1967, 470–479, 490–491.

165 And like nothingness was to Sartre (See Sartre 1978, 84; 1943, 287–288).

166 Berkeley 1949a, 42 and 1949b, 212. Also, the Buddhist logician *Dharmakîrti* (530–600 AD or 600–660 AD) held that "(t)o exist (somewhere) ... is the same as being perceived (Bijlert 1987, 103. See Wood 1991, 138, 172, 185)." This

tion from which all other possible truths are derived", and thus even "eternal truths", i.e. truths the denial of which would involve logical contradiction, were created by God. There were no "eternal truths" before God made them, and He could, for instance, have made it untrue that all lines from the center of a circle to its circumference are equal, if He would have so wished.[167] Thus God was to Descartes that preconceptual and precultural principle that underlies the world in which we understand our being through language and discursive thinking[168].

On the other hand, the experience of emptiness may also be accepted as such, i.e. as an experience with no content that is only metaphorically referred to as a union with God or merging to *Brahman* etc. In such cases we would not be allowed to read an experiential intentionality off a grammatical one, as the mystic is conscious without being conscious *of* (anything). All intentional verbal descriptions of this experience are only figurative means to verbalize what is essentially ineffable and empty.[169]

Thus, for instance, to Meister Eckhart, God or Godhead may be said to provide the theological content for an experience of emptiness. For him, an experience of empty consciousness (*gezücket*, 'rapture') is an experience interpreted as a nonintentional encounter with God in the "ground of the soul".[170]

1.4.3. Mystical experience and mysticism

The reason why ineffable and empty mystical experiences are yet given various kinds of verbal descriptions is the fact that we have to live most of our lives in an everyday consciousness, and need to judge the meaning of mystical experiences for ourselves in terms of our everyday categories[171]. The mystical experience would remain quite meaningless unless it

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is typical of Buddhism in general; the Sanskrit word '*upalabdhi*' may be translated either as 'exist' or as 'perceive' (Lindtner 1982, 271 n. 240). See also p. 80 n. 36.

167 Alanen & Knuuttila 1988, 12–17.

168 Mircea Eliade (1974a, 5, 34–35, 75–77, 85) has described man's historical existence from this point of view as a "fall", and primeval archetypes, like God, that precede the fall both logically and historically as constructing The Reality.

169 See Bernhardt 1990, 222.

170 Forman 1990c, 101–112; Bernhardt 1990, 222.

171 Stace (1961, 61) remarks that only in some rare cases – like those of the Buddha and John Ruysbroeck – has the mystical experience become permanent, "running concurrently with, and in some way fused and integrated with, the normal or common consciousness." Forman 1990b, 8 notes that it is only Stace's extrovertive mysticism that may denote the permanent state of a mystic.

were conceptualized, and thus incorporated into a person's total way of experiencing, i.e. to his or her life as a whole[172].

Mystics and "theologians" of different religious traditions tend to interpret mystical experiences in accordance with their religious tradition, even though this would create some tension between the interpretation and the experience as actually felt. Thus, for instance, Martin Buber wrote that because of the Jewish sense of the gulf between humankind and God he had to reject the otherwise convincing claim that his mystical experience had been one of total union[173].

The need to have a *continuous* religious interpretation of one's being-in-the-world is very well expressed by Eila Helander in her study of Trinidadian Evangelicals when she writes that for them, life with God as a qualitatively different life "does not mean that experiences are isolated incidences but that they form rather a continuous state of varying intensities."[174] Thus, even for Eckhart, the *summum bonum* was not rapture *per se*, but a more permanent transformation of man known as a habitual union with God. The inwardness reached in mystical rapture had to be dragged outwards, as it were, to establish a constant relationship with God.[175]

Similarly, Grace M. Jantzen stresses that the ultimate goal of mystics is not in some extraordinary peak experiences, but in a life which is in constant union with God. She cites St. John of the Cross, Bernard of Clairvaux and Julian of Norwich to prove that mystics in fact do describe their experiences verbally, and argues that William James' concept of experience is too narrow to do justice to mystics.[176]

Jantzen considers the shift from the patristic emphasis on the objective content of the mystical experience to the modern emphasis on the subjective psychological states of consciousness as an unhappy development[177]. According to her, this development has its roots in the thought of James who, despite his empiricism, was under the influence of Romanticism and idealism. Thus, his idea of ineffable mystical experiences would be influenced more by Friedrich Schleiermacher than by writings of mystics.[178]

However, as I see it, we should not reject ineffable mystical experiences as something alien to religious life. Mystics do, after all, report the occurrence of these experiences. Mysticism is a particular mode of experiencing that exists in many religions side by side with other forms of religious life. It both contributes to the doctrinal development of a religion and is affected by it in the sense that, on the one hand doctrines re-

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172 Batson & Ventis 1982, 87–89. Cf. also Wach 1958, 60.
173 Quoted in Franklin 1990, 298.
174 Helander 1986, 47, 189.
175 Forman 1990c, 112–115.
176 Jantzen 1989, 300–313.
177 Jantzen 1989, 295, 300.
178 Jantzen 1989, 295–299.

flect mystical experiences, and on the other doctrines shape the meanings mystics give to their experiences.

Thus, it is possible for a "believer" to hold certain mystical beliefs without himself or herself having dramatic mystical experiences. It is even likely that mystical systems have been partly developed by people who have not themselves had mystical peak experiences. However, becoming familiar with mystical doctrines may change one's way of experiencing his or her being-in-the-world, so that it may become quite similar to that of a person whose everyday experiencing has been changed through having had mystical experiences. In other words, one can in principle arrive, with discursive thinking, at the conclusion that discursive thinking cannot reach the ultimate truth.

To provide only one example, D.Z. Phillips most likely has not undergone an experience of empty consciousness, but nevertheless has put forward a view that expressions of religious language do not refer to reality at all, that religious images are not images of anything other than of themselves, and that the idea of God's ineffability thus is only a way to express the limits of language. He is also said to quote mystics often and to have admitted the relevance of finding examples from literature for the philosophy of religion.[179] Janet Soskice, for her part, explains the ineffability of the absolute reality philosophically by stating that "God-talk" *refers* genuinely to God although it *describes* Him only metaphorically[180].

1.4.4. Mysticism Defined

Mystical experiences in relation to other conscious states

Diagram 2. on the next page, adapted from Roland Fischer[181], shows how mystical experiences are related to other kinds of experiences.

The circle of the diagram consists of two opposing continua (left and right), both starting from a normal state of consciousness. The external continuum of increasing ergotropic arousal includes creative, psychotic and ecstatic experiences, whereas the internal continuum of increasing trophotropic arousal encompasses such hypoaroused states as *zazen* meditation and *samâdhi*.[182]

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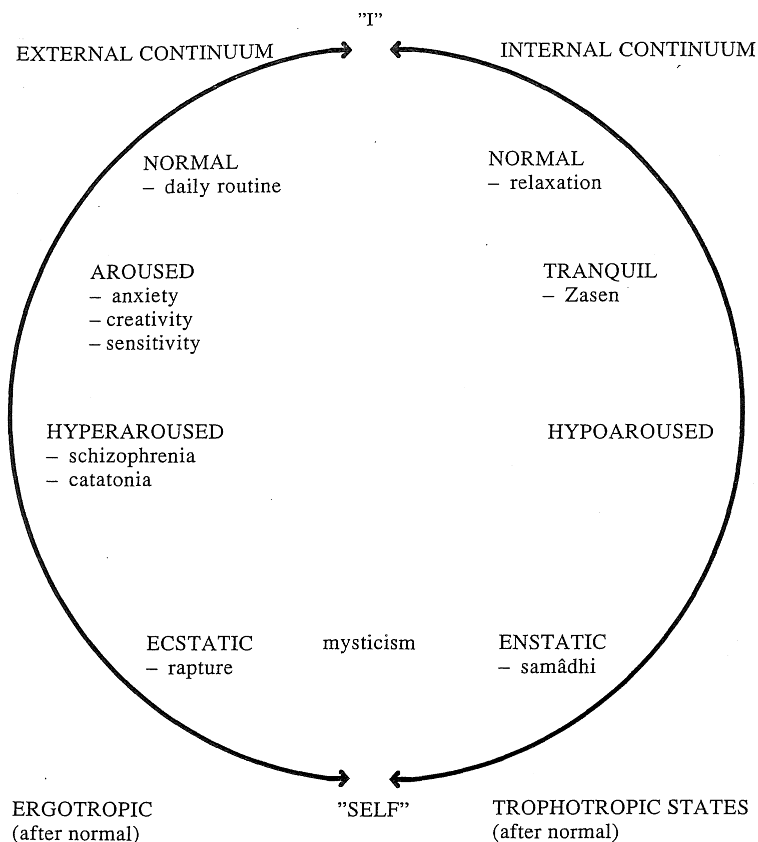
179 Phillips 1976, 148–149; Salomäki 1990, 405–406, 408.

180 Soskice 1985, 109, 137–148.

181 Fischer 1971, 898.

182 Fischer 1971, 897. Fischer speaks about "perception-hallucination" and "perception-meditation" continua. I have substituted "external" and "internal" for these, because either opening up to the world or concentrating on the restricted contents of one's own mind is here the point. This is also evident in Fischer's

Diagram 2. Conscious states



The two continua represent two mutually exclusive states of arousal, the external continuum representing the arousal of the sympathetic nervous system and the internal continuum that of the parasympathetic. They also have different physiological concomitants, and for instance moderate doses of hallucinogens such as LSD can get one moving along the external continuum, whereas minor tranquilizers and some muscle relaxants may initiate travel along the internal continuum.[183]

The essential difference between the normal state of consciousness and the two exalted states is that the relationship between one's 'me' and the

use of the word 'ecstasy' (< Gr. *ekstasis*), which I have complemented with 'enstasis' as the opposite. Moreover, hallucination and meditation are not mutually exclusive phenomena. On *samâdhi*, see p. 25 above.

[183] Fischer 1971, 897–898.

external world is experienced in a radically different way. In the diagram, this is illustrated with the words 'I' and 'self', the opposition of which bears some resemblance to Georg Herbert Mead's distinction between 'me' as object (Fischer's 'I') and 'I' as subject (Fischer's 'self')[184].

To Fischer, 'self' is that which experiences and 'I' is that which is experienced in the physical space-time[185]. In other words, during the 'I'-state of daily routine, one's 'self' is experienced as separate from the external world.[186] But when one progresses along either one of the continua, the separateness of subject and object gradually disappears, due to an increasing integration of cortical and subcortical activity. "This unity", Fischer writes, "is reflected in the experience of Oneness with everything, a Oneness with the universe that is oneself."[187]

The reason why the two mutually exclusive routes both lead to an experience of unity, is that in both processes the external world is gradually forgotten, as input of outside information is reduced.[188] Thus, the 'selves' of ecstasy and *samâdhi* are, in fact, one and the same self[189].

Moreover, at the peak of ergotropic ecstasy a rebound to trophotropic enstasy (*samâdhi)* appears, revealing the close connection between the end points of the two diametrically opposite routes[190]. Thus, I consider the external and internal continua to represent the introvertive and extrovertive mystical experiences[191], respectively. Consequently, I cannot agree with Robert Forman, who reserves the word 'mysticism' only to the trophotropic states[192].

According to Fischer, a mystic can attain ecstasy (and enstasy as well, I think) without having to undergo the intermediate phases, such as schizophrenia for example[193]. However, I remain undecided at which point ex-

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184 Mead 1967, 136–210. To Mead, 'self' is 'I' and 'me' together. See also above p. 38.

185 Cf. also Satrte's distinction between pre-reflective consciousness and "ego" (above p. 39).

186 Fischer 1971, 900–902. Saying that the 'I' is experienced as separate from the world, makes the point more clear than saying (like Fischer) that the world is experienced as separate from oneself.

187 Fischer 1971, 902.

188 Fischer 1971, 897, 900–901. On part of the ergotropic states, this is proven, among other things, by the fact that in drawings of schizophrenics the horizon is unusually high, and may even disappear altogether (Fischer 1971, 899). From the logical point of view, we can say that losing one's self and losing the external world amount to the same, with regard to the relationship of these two.

189 Fischer 1971, 900.

190 Fischer 1971, 902. Fischer sees the rebound only as a physiological protective mechanism.

191 See above pp. 26–28.

192 Forman 1990b, 7.

193 Fischer 1971, 897.

actly on the continua a person's experience can be said to turn to mystical. What is needed in this study, is some criteria on the basis of which an experience can be *definitely* said to be mystical.

The three characteristics of mystical experience

I have adopted the criteria for mystical experiences from Paul Griffiths, who divides mystical experiences in three types, according to whether the state of consciousness is (1) pure, (2) unmediated and/or (3) nondualistic[194].

In the first case, we have a mental event that has no phenomenological attributes[195] and no content[196]. In the second case, we have a mental event that may have as its necessary condition a certain (culture-bound) conceptual scheme, without it being necessary that the phenomenological attributes or content of the mental event in question reflect any element of that conceptual scheme. In the third case, we have a mental event whose phenomenological attributes or content do not include any structural opposition between subject and object.[197]

Of these experiences, pure consciousness is of logical necessity also unmediated and nondualistic. In the unmediated experience, consciousness may also be pure and the experience may also be nondualistic, but neither condition is a logically necessary concomitant. The nondualistic experience may also be unmediated and in it consciousness may also be pure, but, again, this is not necessarily so. As I see it, the presence of any one of these three characteristics of experience allows us to categorize the experience as mystical.

The pure consciousness event (PCE, as abbreviated by Forman) is a form of Stace's introvertive mysticism characterized as contentless consciousness[198]. The four articles in Forman 1990a establish with reasonable certainty that these PCEs do occur[199]. Forman describes the PCE along the same lines as Griffiths to be a contentless state of consciousness in which there occur no changes, and which is not constructed by the subject's beliefs, concepts and expectations. Thus it is also unmediated in Griffiths' sense: in it all previous expectations are confounded and transcended, as we can read in the following quotation from Bernadette Roberts:[200]

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194 Griffiths 1990.

195 i.e. attributes that make it possible to classify a mental event as being e.g. a visual or an olfactory presentation etc. (Griffiths 1990, 72–73).

196 i.e. that which separates a mental event from other members of its class (e.g. a vision of a tree from a vision of a car) (ibid.).

197 Griffiths 1990, 75–77.

198 Forman 1990b, 8. See above p. 34.

199 Chapple 1990; Griffiths 1990; Forman 1990c; Matt 1990. See Forman 1990b, 21, 30.

200 Forman 1990b, 3, 20–25. Similarly in Rothberg 1990, 183.

> I was left without a way to account for this experience. . . . Clearly, I had fallen outside my own, as well as the traditional, frame of reference ...[201]

Forman has explained this with what he calls a forgetting model[202]. It is based on experiments in visual perception where a visual image on the retina has been kept unchanged for a certain period. The effect with the closest parallel to mystical "forgetting" may be found in cases where a person is in a so-called *Ganzfeld*, a completely patternless visual field, such as walking or sitting in a blizzard. Experimentally a *Ganzfeld* may be produced, for example, by taping two halves of a Ping-Pong ball over the eyes. Under such circumstances the person in question first sees the whiteness as fog or cloud, but within several minutes things seem to go black. Within ten to twenty minutes, *Ganzfeld* subjects report a "blank-out" which has been described as a state of not seeing (and not a state of seeing nothing). Thus, unchanging visual stimulation makes the subject lose or forget the sense of vision altogether so that he or she does not even know whether his or her eyes are open or not.[203]

Now, Deikman's deautomatization techniques, as well as those of Ornstein and Naranjo referred to by Forman, may be seen to have a similar but a more comprehensive effect than the *Ganzfeld*[204]. Writes Forman:

> A vacuous state of emptiness, a nonresponsiveness to the external world, is evoked in the central nervous system by the catalytic action of the continuous subroutine. Such an emptiness, it should be clear,is not like remembering something and applying it to form or reform visual (and other) information, rather it is more akin to a massive forgetting.[205]

Thus, a mystic uses meditation techniques to enable the mind to forget all thought and sensation in a PCE where not only visual construction, but all construction has ceased. According to reports of many mystics, the forgetting includes also the teachings of the particular religious tradition in question. Thus, there remains nothing that could phenomenologically separate one PCE from another, and, consequently, these kinds of mystical experiences are alike in all cultures.[206] This is in accordance with Fischer's idea of reduction of input information from the external world.

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201 Quoted in Forman 1990b, 20. To provide only one more example of transcending one's familiar frame of reference, I cite St. John Ruysbroeck: "For all words and all that one can learn or understand according to the mode of the creatures, are foreign to the truth that I have seen and far below it (*De Ornatu Spiritalium Nuptiarum* as quoted in Underhill 1923, 398–399)."

202 Also Sundén (1990, 124) describes mystical experience as "total oblivion".

203 Ornstein 1978, 142–143; Forman 1990b, 36.

204 See above pp. 27–28, and also Pahnke's and Richards' results on p. 34. Also Rothberg 1990, 184.

205 Forman 1990b, 37 (addition in brackets by I.P.).

206 Forman 1990b, 37–39; Rothberg 1990, 184–187.

The forgetting model also helps us to understand the alleged ineffability of mystical experiences. Because during the PCE all mental construction ceases, language is forgotten like all other phenomenological attributes and contents of consciousness, and thus a verbal description of the PCE adds to it something that was not part of the primary event. In this sense, all language is inappropriate in describing the mystical experience of a PCE. There is a total disjunction between the PCE and the verbal description that is made after the experience, and the PCE is thus ineffable in principle.[207]

However, mystics do, after all, describe PCEs verbally, and so do scholars of mysticism. The dilemma is inherent in the very word, 'ineffable', that seems logically contradictory as nothing is, strictly speaking, ineffable if it can be said at least that it is ineffable.

It seems that we can describe the PCE verbally only in such ways as to cut it out from the linguistically based human reality. Thus, the PCE itself can be described only negatively[208] (or metaphorically), and other statements are made only of its immediate context or of those "seams" that both separate and connect it to ordinary human reality. So, for instance, the sentence "X had a PCE" describes only the context of the PCE by referring to the person "in" which the experience happened although the experience itself transcended all subject-object structures.[209] The PCE itself is only like a hole or a crack in human reality; it is empty.

This involves the question: How is a person able to identify a PCE as his or hers because it is, in a way, nothing? In other words, how can a PCE and an ordinary state of consciousness be connected as states of mind of the same person, given that there seemingly can be no intersection of something-like-that and nothing-like-that? It may be helpful to suggest that a PCE does not change to an ordinary state of consciousness, but that these two only follow each other in the mental sequencing of a person.[210]

The PCE is, then, like a hole in this series and belongs to it, or is connected to it as a hole belongs to a sock. A person remembers his or her

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207 Forman 1990b, 41. Loy (1988, 47, 80–86. Cf. Heidegger 1987, 207 (1941, 163–164)) also remarks that as the linguistic constitution of our consciousness is in a sense learned, why would it be impossible to "unlearn" it? Bråkenhielm 1985, 33 makes the important distinction that a mystical experience can be ineffable either in principle or in practice.

208 Prigge & Kessler 1990, 279. See also Perovich 1990, 249. Cf. Stace's (1961, 303–305) view that mystical experience can be described verbally although those statements tend to be contradictory and paradoxical as the laws of logic have been transcended in the experience.

209 Prigge & Kessler 1990, 278–279.

210 This logical problem has been discussed by Vladimir Jankélévich (1977, 219–226, 265, 269, 362–363) with regard to life changing to death (see Utriainen, 1989, 2). In the background is the same kind of criticism of causality as in Hume 1955, 63.

state of consciousness previous to the PCE and the state of consciousness after the PCE, and is aware that between these two there was a disjunction that, however, was not unconsciousness[211].

As to the nondualistic experience as presented by Griffiths, its ineffability is of a different nature. It is experienced as ineffable because in it no structural opposition between subject and object prevails, although the separation between subject, predicate and object is the basic structure of our language that thus reflects the ordinary way of experiencing[212]. Under these circumstances the nondualistic mystical experience can be described in so many words only in a language that bears no dualistic implications; and thus the mystic may use such expressions as "merging with", "being engulfed by" and other expressions referring to a unitive experience.[213] In this way, the nondualistic experience is as though ineffable in practice in the sense that it may be hard to find words to describe it.

The unmediated mystical experience, for its part, is ineffable in the sense that the mystic feels that the phenomenological attributes and content of the experience cannot be adequately described or expressed with the language he or she is familiar with. The consciousness, however, is not empty as is the case in the PCE, and the mystic may find a new way of expressing his or her experience verbally. Yet this experience also entails a feeling of the relativity of traditional language and ways of giving meaning to experience, and consequently, it is ineffable (or as though ineffable) in practice.

An answer to the "constructivist" criticism of the sameness of mystical experience

However, the possibility of PCEs occurring at all has been severely criticized by scholars termed "constructivists", with Steven Katz as the leading figure[214]. According to Katz, mystical experiences are always causally[215] shaped by the concepts which the mystic brings to the experience, and there cannot thus be any pure unmediated experience or consciousness. Thus, various meditative techniques do not lead to unconditioning or deconditioning of consciousness, but only to a reconditioning. A mystic

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211 This scheme perfectly corresponds to Forman's (1990b, 28) description of his experience of a PCE in meditation.

212 See Griffiths 1990, 77–78. There are, of course, also differing views on the nature of the relationship between language and reality, even in Western philosophy (e.g. Whitehead 1978, 35–36, 40–41, 140–141, 166–167).

213 Bernhardt 1990, 223.

214 e.g. Forman 1990a and Stoeber 1992, *passim.*

215 Katz 1978, 40: "What I wish to show is only that there is a clear causal connection between the religious and social structure one brings to experience and the nature of one's actual religious experience."

does not attain pure consciousness but only a consciousness conditioned in a different way that may, for that matter, be an unusual and exciting state. Yet the experience is determined in advance by cultural tradition, and thus mystics of different traditions cannot have the same experience.[216]

Yet the causal connection supposed by Katz is *not* clear as he has not shown how precisely a learned set of beliefs and concepts *causes* an experience and why, for instance, some are mystics and some are not. It is difficult to explain, using the constructivist thesis, how mystics can persevere in their own mode of life and way of thinking, even though they are often regarded as heretics in their own tradition. Katz explains religious innovation[217] by supposing that novel ways of experiencing have been determined by some other tradition-context, but then the meaning of the latter becomes so inclusive that it practically looses its meaning[218].

All Katz has done is to *assume* that language enters and partly shapes and constructs all experience, which then means for us that no PCEs can occur and that difference in mystical concepts always means a difference in mystical experiences as well. No further argumentation for this is given.[219] To point to the diversity of mystical descriptions is only an *illustration* of the constructivist thesis, not a proof[220].

Thus, even though we would accept that experiences ordinarily receive their meaning from expression and thus are mediated[221], there remains the possibility of those rare pure consciousness events that are not experienced as meaningful (and not not-meaningful, for that matter) during the event because no concepts are being used. At least Katz has not presented any argument against this, nor has anyone else except the neo-Kantian type of epistemology that on *a priori* grounds allows no conscious escape from the forms of perception and categories of thought that mediate our experiencing of our being-in-the-world.[222]

Consequently, it is impossible in every case to read from difference in verbal description a difference in the experience as well. A difference

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216 Katz 1978, 26, 33, 57, 59 and 1983, 5. See Forman 1990b, 3–4, 9–10; Stoeber 1992, 107–108. Stoeber has presented an "experiental–constructivist" view, according to which: "Mystics from different traditions can experience the same reality (even inadvertently), though giving an account which differs according to their socio–religious tradition (Stoeber 1992, 114)."

217 Stoeber (1992, 114) sees mystics as the central figures in religious development.

218 Forman 1990b, 14–15, 17; Rothberg 1990, 174; Almond 1990, 213–216. In cultural anthropology, cultural determinism has long since been abandoned (see Keesing 1974, 74).

219 Forman 1990b, 12, 16; Rothberg 1990, 166–167; Bernhardt 1990, 227, 230.

220 Evans 1989, 54.

221 That ordinary experiences are mediated and intentional is accepted also in Bernhardt 1990, 229 and Woodhouse 1990, 255, 261.

222 Bernhardt 1990, 232; Woodhouse 1990, 261. Criticism of Katz' neo–Kantianism is presented in Evans 1989, 59–60 and Rothberg 1990, 171–174, 183.

in verbal description made after the experience entails a difference in the meaning a mystic gives to his or her PCE, but it does not necessarily entail a difference in the experience (as a referent of the description)[223].

Thus, the PCE could be the same in all cultures and traditions in spite of its various kinds of descriptions: a wakeful state of contentless consciousness that is like a hole in our ordinary experiencing. As such, it does not bring knowledge *during* the experience (and thus is, nevertheless, in accordance with Kantian epistemology), although it may bring knowledge as an effect after the experience (and thus shake the foundations of Kantian epistemology). What I have in mind is an effect that shows the relativity of the foundations of our discursive thinking and use of language. If the forms of perception and categories of thought are once transcended in a PCE, they are no longer felt as absolute and necessarily binding.[224]

As to the nondual experience, its structure is universally the same: in it no distinction between subject and object prevails. Otherwise its phenomenological attributes and content may vary from one tradition to another. Similarly, the unmediated experience has universally as its characteristic an experience of the relativity of language as the mystic transcends in it his or her familiar linguistic frame of reference (but not necessarily language in principle). Consequently, it may also have different phenomenological attributes and content in different traditions.

To sum up, I mean by 'mysticism' not only mystical experiences, but also their interpretations, as well as various mystical-like experiences of a lesser intensity, the precise nature of which is left undetermined in this study.

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[223] Forman (1990b, 18) rightly makes a point from Frege's finding that two terms with different meanings (e.g. 'North Star' and 'Pole Star') can have the same reference (here: planet Venus). See above p. 21 n.38.

[224] Cf. Rothberg 1990, 179; Perovich 1990, 239–244.

2. SOURCES

2.1. The Works Used as Sources

The sources of this study comprise Buddhist literature from the earliest canonical texts up to a few 5th century AD works, with only one text being of a much later, but uncertain origin (the *Dhammakâyassa Atthavaṇṇanâ*)[1]. A chronology of the texts is seen in diagram 3. on the next page. All of them, except the *Dhammakâyassa Atthavaṇṇanâ*, represent Indian Buddhism[2]. The last mentioned is a *Theravâdin* text, written in Sri Lanka.

The sources have been selected to represent the most influential of the Indian Buddhist schools: *Theravâda*, *Sarvâstivâda*, *Lokottaravâda* of the *Mahâsaṁghika*s, early Mahâyâna, *Mâdhyamika* (or: *Madhyamaka*), *Yogâcâra/Vijñânavâda* and the *Tathâgatagarbha*-literature. I have tried to use those texts in which each school's particular teachings, related to my research theme, best come forward.

In a nutshell, the teachings of the schools have developed as follows: The *Theravâdin*s presented the doctrines of not-self (*anattâ*), of the world as consisting of compounded *dharma*s, and of nirvâṇa as an uncompounded reality or Absolute. These ideas were further developed by the *Sarvâstivâdin*s. The *Mahâsaṁghika*s may have been the predecessors of *Mahâyâna*, and their subschool, the *Lokottaravâdin*s, developed a view of the Buddha as a transcendent (*lokottara*) being.

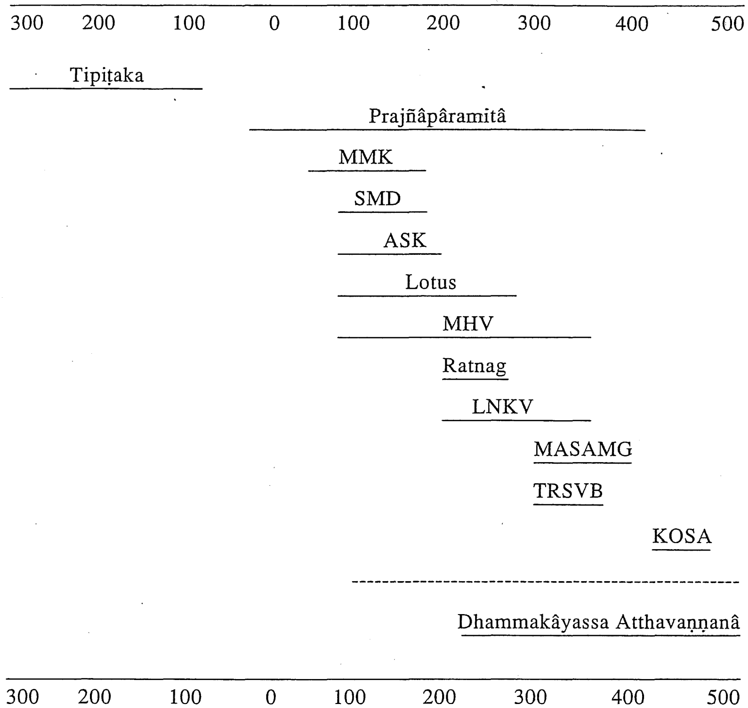
The *Prajñâpâramitâsûtra*s of the early Mahâyâna and the works of *Nâgârjuna*, the founder of the *Mâdhyamika* school, denied the difference between compounded and uncompounded realities and considered everything empty (*śûnya*). The *Yogâcâra* or *Vijñânavâda* school took an idealistic position in explaining that the world is "the thinking mind only" (*cittamâtrataṁ*) or "idea only" (*vijñaptimâtrataṁ*). Finally, in some Mahâyâna works a special teaching of '*Tathâgatagarbha*' ('womb or germ of *Tathâgata*') is developed to show that the buddha-nature is inherent in every being.

Such forms of popular Buddhism as speculation about the paradise of the Buddha *Amitâbha* have been left outside the scope of this study[3]. The

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1 Coèdes 1956, 258.
2 See above pp. 16–17.
3 See the basic texts, the smaller and larger *Sukhâvatîvyuha*.

Diagram 3. Sources



Key: Tipiṭaka (Theravâda representing "Hînayâna"), Prajñâpâramitâsûtras (Mahâyâna), MMK = Mûlamadhyamakakârikâ of Nâgârjuna (Mâdhyamika representing Mahâyâna), SMD = Saṁdhinirmocanasûtra (Yogâcâra/Vijñânavâda representing Mahâyâna), ASK = Aśokâvadâna (Sarvâstivâda representing "Hînayâna"), Lotus = Saddharmapuṇḍarîka (Mahâyâna), MHV = Mahâvastu (Lokottaravâda representing Mahâsaṁghikas of "Hînayâna"), Ratnagotra = Ratnagotravibhâga (Tathâgatagarbha theory of Mahâyâna), LNKV = Laṅkâvatârasûtra (Yogâcâra/Vijñânavâda representing Mahâyâna), MASAMG = Mahâyânasaṁgraha of Asaṅga (Yogâcâra/Vijñânavâda representing Mahâyâna), TRSVB = Trisvabhâvakârikâ of Vasubandhu (Yogâcâra/Vijñânavâda representing Mahâyâna), Kosa = Abhidharmakośa of Vasubandhu jr. (Vaibhâṣika representing "Hînayâna"), Dhammakâyassa Atthavaṇṇanâ (later Theravâda).

same holds for the relatively late conception of an *Âdibuddha* ('primordial Buddha')[4], and the later developments in Buddhist logic[5].

Of the early Buddhist schools, I have focused on *Theravâda*, using *Sarvâstivâdin* sources for additional information on later development. The

[4] See Getty 1962, 2–3.
[5] See Stcherbatsky 1930–32; Ruegg 1981, 58–86; van Bijlert 1987.

Theravâda sources are: the *Dîgha-*, *Majjhima-*, *Saṁyutta-* and the *Aṅguttaranikâya*, together with the *Udâna* and the *Suttanipâta* of the *Khuddakanikâya*. Of the *Vinayapiṭaka*, I have used its first portion, the *Mahâvagga*. The *Abhidhammapiṭaka* is represented by its *Dhamasangaṇî* portion only.

A few words concerning the way I have determined this selection, may be required. First of all, one should note that there is no special corpus of mystical texts in the Buddhist Tradition. This may be due to the fact that mysticism is not a marginal or a heretical phenomenon in Buddhism, but in a way penetrates the whole of its doctrine[6]. Consequently, my task is to explicate the mystical elements from a great number of texts, dealing with various aspects of Buddhist doctrine and mythology.

This also means that the analysis does not focus on texts as such, but on ideas expressed in texts. I do not aim at a folkloristic or a philological analysis of a given textual corpus *in toto*, but instead only try to extract the mystical elements from the texts, through philosophical analysis. In a few cases I have cited the source *in extenso* and placed the quotation in an appendix, to show the type of material from which I have drawn my conclusions.

I have gone through the first four *Nikâya*s of the *Suttapiṭaka* with the aid of Russell Webb's *An analysis of the Pâli Canon*[7], searching for relevant passages. In this, I have also benefited from the studies of André Bareau, identifying from the early canonical texts the fragments of the Buddha's biography[8].

I have used those passages that deal with the Buddha's experiences and their interpretations, and with the way man's experience of being-in-the-world is constituted. This latter theme is divided into questions concerning the nature of perception, consciousness and of 'self' on the one hand, and of the nature of the external world and the Absolute on the other.

Of the *Khuddakanikâya*, I have consulted only the description of the "uncompounded" (*asaṅkhata*) reality in the *Udâna*, and the *Suttanipâta* which contains some very ancient material[9]. Reference is made to the *Suttanipâta*'s fragments of the Buddha's biography, and to the passages in the *Aṭṭhakavagga* containing descriptions of mystical experiences[10].

The *Mahâvagga* of the *Vinayapiṭaka* is used because it contains a description of the formation of the Buddhist *saṅgha*. This narrative includes

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[6] See above p. 15.

[7] Webb 1975. I have also compiled an index in Finnish of the contents of the *Tipiṭaka*, published in Gothóni & Mahâpañña 1987, pp. 227–251 (see ibid. pp. 7–8).

[8] Bareau 1962, 1963, 1970–71, 1974a, 1974b, 1979. Cf. Lamotte 1958, 718–756. I have dealt with the Buddha's biography in Pyysiäinen 1988.

[9] Geiger 1968, 20.

[10] The passages on mysticism have been discussed by Luis Gómez and Tilmann Vetter 1988 (see Vetter 1988, 101–106).

such basic formulations of the Buddhist doctrine as the four noble truths and the fire sermon. The *Dhammasangaṇî* of the *Abhidhammapiṭaka* is used because it contains an important description of the "uncompounded", as shown by Bareau[11].

It would be superfluous to list here all the individual passages in the *Tipiṭaka* which I have referred to in my analysis. The source-critical problems related to the *Tipiṭaka* will be discussed in the next chapter.

Of the *Sarvâstivâdin* sources, I have consulted *Vasubandhu*'s important summary of the "Hînayâna", the *Abhidharmakośa*, which I have read through to find parallels to the *Theravâda* material. The *Aśokâvadâna*, a *Sarvâstivâdin* work, has been used as it contains an important description of the cosmic symbolism of the Buddha's body. This is also explicitly dealt with in a much later *Theravâdin* text, the *Dhammakâyassa Atthavaṇṇnanâ*, which has also been consulted. The *Mahâvastu* of the *Lokottaravâdins* is used because it is an important "bridge work" between Hînayâna and Mahâyâna[12], and contains a conception of the transcendent nature of the Buddha.

As to the Mahâyâna, I have used the various *Prajñâpâramitâsûtra*s, which I have analysed systematically in Conze's translation[13]. In adddition, I have made use of the Heart Sûtra. These have been supplemented by the *Mûlamadhyamakakârikâ*, which is regarded as "the *magnum opus*"[14] and "the basic text of the *Mâdhyamika*"[15]. The enormous *Mahâprajñâpâramitâśâstra*, whose authorship has been much debated, is only occasionally used as secondary literature[16]. Besides this, I have used one of the most popular works of the Mahâyâna, the *Saddharmapuṇḍarîka* which contains, among other things, the classical presentation of the Buddha's skill in means (*upâyakauśalya*).

The *Vijñânavâdins* are here represented by the *Saṁdhinirmocanasûtra*, a basic work of the school, and the *Mahâyânasaṁgraha* of *Asaṅga* together with the *Trisvabhâvakârikâ* of *Vasubandhu*. *Vijñânavâdin* tenets are also found in the *Laṅkâvatârasûtra* which is also used here. The *Tathâgatagarbha* doctrines are here studied as they appear in the *Ratnagotravibhâga*, lucidly summarizing the *Tathâgatagarbha* ideas. All these works have been systematically analysed.

In the following sections 2.2.–2.5., the most important editions and translations of the relevant texts will be briefly reviewed.

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[11] Bareau 1951.

[12] Pye 1978, 60 and n. 1.

[13] Conze 1984.

[14] Lindtner 1982, 10: "(MMK) which I axiomatically, but in accordance with a unanimous and, for all we know, reliable Indian, Chinese and Tibetan tradition regard as his *magnum opus*." And on p. 24: "(It) may suitably be labelled the *chef d'oeuvre* among Nâgârjuna's dialectical tracts."

[15] Murti 1980, 88 n. 5.

[16] See MPPS, t. I, p. x; Conze 1960, 93–94; Ruegg 1981, 32–33; Lindtner 1982, 11.

2.2. The Formation of the *Tipiṭaka*

Source critical problems related to the *Tipiṭaka* are notorious. As noted by Uma Chakravarti, scholars have often lumped texts ranging from the fifth century BC to the fifth century AD into one category and treated the *Tipiṭaka* as a homogeneous whole[17]. Chakravarti's own attempt to use a more refined approach, however, suffers from the fact that she accepts without further discussion the traditional date of the Buddha's death as being around 480 BC[18]. Yet the scholarship of P.H.L. Eggermont and Heinz Bechert has shown that this date can no longer be accepted, as acknowledged by myself, Klaus Karttunen and Hans-Joachim Klimkeit as well[19].

The traditional dating of the Buddha's death, so scrupulously argued by André Bareau[20], has been shown to be due to a Sinhalese attempt to harmonize the Buddha's death as simultaneous with the coming of *Vijaya*, the cultural hero of the Sinhalese people[21]. Thus, there is no evidence independent of the Sinhalese chronicles, for the so-called longer chronology of the Buddha, and Bareau's statement that all evidence for the shorter chronology is dependent on the *Aśokâvadâna* has been turned around[22].

However, the shorter chronology of Sanskrit texts, placing the Buddha's death around 368 BC, cannot be accepted as such either[23]. All we can safely conclude is that the Buddha's death must have taken place roughly around 350 BC[24], i.e. about a hundred years later than formerly believed. However, there still remains a gap of at least three hundred years between the death of the Buddha and the writing of the *Tipiṭaka* that took place in the 3rd decade BC. Final agreement about the contents of the Pâli canon, however, is said to have been reached as late as the fifth century AD.[25]

We cannot even be sure about the exact date of the writing of the *Tipiṭaka*. Friedrich Weller has tried to prove that the testimony of the Sinhalese chronicles on this matter is a later interpolation[26]. Moreover, ac-

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17 Chakravarti 1987, 2.

18 Chakravarti 1987, 1.

19 Pyysiäinen 1988, 6–8; Karttunen 1989, 151–153; Klimkeit 1990, 23–24.

20 Bareau 1953.

21 Bechert 1982, 34–36; 1986, 19–24, 50–51 and 1988, 24–26; Eggermont 1965–79, II 41–44, IV 77–120, V 69–70, VIII 55–57.

22 Bareau 1953, 40–43. Cf. Bechert 1986, 42.

23 See Lamotte 1958, 14–15.

24 Eggermont 1965–79, VIII 57; Bechert 1986, 39; Hirakawa 1990, 22–23, 91–93.

25 See Winternitz 1972, 5–8; Geiger 1968, 1–2, 11; Bechert & von Simson 1979, 26, 69–71; Lancaster 1987, 504–505; Prebish 1987, 120.

26 *Dîpavaṁsa*, XX 18ff.; *Mahâvaṁsa*, XXXIII 100–101. Weller 1928, 161–164.

cording to J.W. de Jong, "nobody has tried to refute Weller's opinion[27]." So, even though parts of the *Tipiṭaka* may contain material from the Buddha's lifetime, it is almost impossible to say which ones.}

Linguistically the *Tipiṭaka* consists of various strata, and parts of it have obviously been translated from another language. As Pâli is a purely literary language, some scholars have held that there has been a sort of original oral canon (Lüders: *Urkanon*) in one "precanonical" (Lévi) language.[28] More recently, Gustav Roth has suggested that the Buddhist tradition was collected immediately after the Buddha's death in the first council of Râjagṛha in one of the *Prâkṛt* dialects.[29]

However, the first council is not considered to be historical by the majority of scholars[30], and J.W. de Jong wrote in 1956 that "there is no evidence whatsoever of the existence of an original canon." According to him, "It seems more reasonable to assume that only a small number of texts, above all verses and stereotyped dogmatic formulas, at an early stage attained a definite form, and that they were subsequently translated into Pâli and other middle-Indo-Aryan languages."[31]

I agree with Erich Frauwallner, in that the further development of the Buddhist tradition took place not in great "catholic councils" but in a series of smaller gatherings where the traditions have been collected. At the same time, new material was included and new schools were formed. Through this process the *Theravâdin*s then adopted the Pâli language as the language of their canon.[32]

2.3. The Split of the *Mahâsaṁghikas*

A hundred years or more after the Buddha's death, Buddhism split into two branches, the *Sthaviravâdin*s and the *Mahâsaṁghika*s. A subschool of the latter, the *Lokottaravâdin*s that resided in Bâmiyân in western Afghanistan, has produced a sort of a biography of the Buddha in Hybrid Sanskrit, the *Mahâvastu.*

The reason for the rise of the new school of *Mahâsaṁghika*s is not altogether clear. According to the *Theravâda* tradition, the *Mahâsaṁghika*s

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27 de Jong 1989, 242.
28 de Jong 1979, 17.
29 Roth 1980, 78.
30 E.g. Oldenberg 1903, 392–393; Winternitz 1972, 4–5; Thomas 1952, 165; Bareau 1955b, 27–29; Lamotte 1958, 141; Prebish 1987, 121.
31 de Jong 1979, 17. See McDermott 1984, 22–23.
32 Frauwallner 1952, 240. See Lamotte 1958, 154 and Eggermont 1965–1979, IV 114–115.

were ideological inheritors of the *Vajjiputtaka* monks whose laxity in ten points of the *Vinaya* was condemned in the council of Vaiśâlî 100 or 110 years after the Buddha's death[33]. This, however, cannot be the reason for the first split, since according to the *Vinaya* texts the council ended in agreement and the *Theravâdin* and *Mahâsaṁghika Vinaya*s do not differ at all in the ten points in question[34].

According to Bareau, the first schism took place, not in Vaiśâlî but in Pâtaliputra about 130 years after the Buddha's death[35]. The reason for this is traced to the fact the future *Sthaviravâdin*s proposed a more rigorous monastic discipline by including new *śaikṣa/sekhiya*-regulations in the *Vinaya* and the future *Mahâsaṁghika*s, on the contrary showed laxity by maintaining that *Arhat*s may have some imperfections. Thus Bareau accepts both of the motives different sources give to the first schism, i.e. the *Sthaviravâdin* tendency to enlarge the *Vinaya* and the so-called five points of *Mahâdeva* criticizing *Arhats*.[36]

However, Janice Nattier and Charles Prebish, relying mainly on the *Śâriputraparipṛcchâsûtra*, see the reason for the first schism solely in the *Sthaviravâdin* enlargement of the *Vinaya*[37], and take the five points of *Mahâdeva* to be related to a later schism inside the *Mahâsaṁghika*s[38]. This supposed later schism separated the followers of *Mahâdeva* from those *Mahâsaṁghika*s who did not accept the five points criticizing the *Arhat*s. The *Lokottaravâdin* authors of the *Mahâvastu* were among the followers of *Mahâdeva*, and thus either moderated the terms for the attainment of the highest goal, or proposed a new goal superseding *Arhat*ship, and thus would have been the predecessors of the Mahâyânistic *bodhisattva*-ideal.[39]

The notorious five points, whose contents vary slightly in different sources can, however, be harmonized as follows:[40]

1) *Arhats* may have nocturnal emissions of semen
2) *Arhats* may be ignorant in worldy matters
3) *Arhats* may show doubt in everyday life
4) *Arhats* must in some cases rely on others
5) Entering the Buddhist path is accompanied by an exclamation (of the word '*duḥkha*')

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33 *Dîpavaṁsa*, IV 52–57, V 21–31.

34 Hofinger 1946; Bareau 1955b, 76–78; Nattier & Prebish 1977, 237–246.

35 According to P. H. L. Eggermont (1965–1979, IV 115–120) the council of Vaiśâlî was not held in Vaiśâlî at all but in the monastery of Kukkuṭârâma near Pâṭaliputra in 258 BC. To Bareau (1955b, 32), the date of the council is uncertain but the location in Vaiśâlî is certain.

36 Bareau 1955b, 88–109. Cf. Hirakawa 1990, 79–83.

37 To Bareau (1955b, 94) this alone seems too trivial a reason for a schism. Nattier and Prebish (1977, 269), however, point out that the ten points Bareau admits having been discussed in the council of Vaiśâlî are just as trivial.

38 Nattier & Prebish 1977, 264–272. See Hirakawa 1990, 79–83.

39 Nattier & Prebish 1977, 257–265.

40 Nattier & Prebish 1977, 251–257.

As to the *bodhisattva*-ideal, the *Mahâvastu* speaks of four practices (*caryâ*) of a bodhisattva: 1) the preparatory natural practice (*prakṛticaryâ*), 2) the practice of the vow (*praṇidhânacaryâ*) which produces the idea of enlightenment, 3) the practice of conformity with the vow (*anulomacaryâ*), and 4) the practice of not backsliding (*anivartanacaryâ*)[41].

The third of these practices is divided into ten stages (*bhûmi*) as follows: 1) the difficult to enter (*dûrâroha*), 2) the fastening (*baddhamânâ*), 3) the flower-adorned (*puṣpamaṇḍitâ*), 4) the beautiful (*rucirâ*), 5) the vast-minded (*cittavistarâ*), 6) the lovely (*rûpavatî*), 7) the difficult to conquer (*durjayâ*), 8) the ascertainment of birth (*janmanirdeśa*), 9) the crown prince (*yauvarâjya*), 10) the coronation (*abhiṣeka*).[42]

The *bhûmis* of the *Mahâvastu*, however, only describe the history of perfect buddhas and thus do not present an ideal to ordinary human beings. They are not connected to the idea of six or ten perfections (*pâramitâ*), do not form gradation, and with the exception of the last two, do not mark progress in the spiritual ascension of a bodhisattva. Moreover, the *bhûmis* have nothing in common with those of the Mahâyana tradition.[43]

2.4. The Beginnings of Mahâyâna

Whether the five points of *Mahâdeva* and the *Lokottaravâdin bhûmis* of a *bodhisattva* were the immediate incentives to the *bodhisattva*-ideal of Mahâyâna or not, they nevertheless reveal discontent towards the Hînayânistic religious goal of *Arhatship*. Thus, *Mahâdeva*'s points are at least a similar expression of a tension between an institutional elite of monks and the mass of laymen, if not yet expressive Mahâyâna[44].

Although the Buddha's followers had been from the beginning in contact with laymen who gave them food and received teaching in return, this relationship was weakened when king *Aśoka* provided the monks with official support and thus guaranteed their relative independence. Organized monastic settlements started to flourish and the role of laymen became more or less irrelevant to the elite strata of monks.[45]

This institutional development was accompanied by an ideological one in which growing importance was given to scholastic elaboration of the

41 MHV, I 39–52.
42 MHV, I 60–124.
43 Lamotte 1958, 695–696; Winternitz 1972, 246 and its n.1; Hirakawa 1990, 307–309.
44 See also Nakamura 1987, 266. Cf. Hirakawa 1990, 253–254, 260, 262.
45 Conze 1975, 85–88. See also Gombrich 1988, 127–134.

conceptual scheme of the Sûtras. The cold intellectualism of this *Abhidharma* is personified by the monk *Śâriputra* whom the Buddhist tradition considers a great master in "reviewing *dharma*s", i.e. in analyzing entities to their ultimate constituents which, according to the *Sarvâstivâdin*s, were real, although the entities were unreal and mere "designations" (*prajñapti*).[46]

By reviewing the lists of *dharma*s in this way the abhidharmists tried to penetrate into the essence of the process of becoming (*bhava*), in order to turn it around and reach the uncompounded nirvâṇa[47]. *Abhidharma* was in a sense an attempt to create a technical language of salvation that would make possible a discourse on things otherwise ineffable. Its central concept was to be '*prajñapti*', 'conventional designation', that immediately shows the nature and function of language.[48]

Under these circumstances, the criticism of *Arhat*s and the subsequent emergence of the *bodhisattva*-ideal may be regarded as expressions of a protest movement of the type that are bound to arise in religions when personal "virtuosity" has been replaced by "official grace" granted by the institutionalized community. The protest is directed against the view that the personal qualities of individuals are of no importance, since membership in the community is the most crucial factor in attaining the highest goal.[49]

The Mahâyâna protest against the community of monks possibly originated among laymen and monks that did not belong to any *Nikâya*s, and who were in the habit of meeting each other around *stûpa*s[50]. The monkish goal of *Arhat*ship was condemned as selfish since it implied that one was willing to secure something for himself only, which was judged contradictory – as no such self was believed to exist. Consequently *Arhat*ship as a goal was replaced by buddhahood which was thought to lie open to everyone. Those who thus perceived the ego-illusion of *Arhat*s called themselves *bodhisattva*s, beings destined to reach enlightenment together with the whole world.[51]

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46 Conze 1960, 13–14; de Jong 1972a, 1; *Aṅguttara*, I 23. See *Kosa*, t. I p. 3 and its n.4.

47 Streng 1967, 43–44.

48 Gómez 1987b, 447.

49 See Weber 1966, 162–195. Joseph Kitagawa (1987, 304) distinguishes three phases in the development of founded religious communities like the Buddhist *saṅgha*: 1) the significance of the founder, 2) the process of formation when a circle of disciples becomes the nucleus of the brotherhood, and 3) the phase when the brotherhood grows into an egalitarian or hierarchical community. In the third phase the community has to meet the surrounding culture, and more than often falls prey to routinization, clericalization and inertia, giving rise to protest movements of various kinds.

50 Hirakawa 1990, 246, 271, 273.

51 See Nakamura 1987, 266–267.

Ascension towards buddhahood proceeded through ten *bhûmis* and six or ten perfections. The ten *bhûmis* were: 1) Great Joy (*pramuditâ*), 2) Immaculate (*vimâla*), 3) Illumination (*prabhâkarî*), 4) Intense Wisdom (*arciṣmatî*), 5) Invincible Strength (*sudurjayâ*), 6) Direct Presence (of Wisdom [*abhimukî*]), 7) Far-reaching (*dûraṅgamâ*), 8) Immovable Steadfastness (*acalâ*), 9) Meritorious Wisdom (*sâdhumatî*), 10) Cloud of the Dharma (*dharmameghâ*).[52]

The six or ten perfections were: Charity or giving, morality, patience, vigour, meditative concentration (*samâdhi*), wisdom (*prajñâ*), and sometimes also skill in means (*upâyakauśalya*), vow, power and cognition[53].

In the *Vimalakîrtinirdeśa*, the idea of *bodhisattva*hood is personified by the intellectual and moral excellency of *Vimalakîrti* who wore the layman's robe but led the life of a mendicant (*śramaṇa*), who lived in a house but had renounced (*asaṁsṛṣṭa*) the triple world, and who had a son, a spouse and a harem although he lived in chastity (*brahmacarya*)[54]. Because of the profoundness of *Vimalakîrti*'s wisdom, no monk ventured to interrogate the reason for his pretended ('*upâyakauśalyena*') illness and the Buddha had to appoint this task to *bodhisattva Mañjuśrî*[55].

Just as they rejected the distinction between monks and laymen, the *bodhisattvas* rejected its parallel, the distinction between *saṁsâra* and nirvâṇa, or compounded and uncompounded realities. As part and parcel of the *Arhat*-ideal, this ontological dualism was considered to be an expression of the ego-illusion similar to that of *Arhat*ship: if there were two spheres there should also be somebody who moves from one to the other. Just as belief in a metaphysical self has been a key to a tripartite ontology of me-world-God, so the Mahâyâna revitalization of the denial of self was now a key to a monistic ontology where the barriers of me, world and the absolute broke down with new force.

Where the earliest Mahâyâna Sûtras were composed is a matter of dispute. According to Râhula Sâṅkṛtyâyana, among others, their cradle lies in the Andhra country, between the rivers Godâvarî and Kistnâ (Kṛṣṇâ) in Southeastern India. Sâṅkṛtyâyana argues that as there is a close resemblance between some doctrines of Mahâyâna and the doctrines of *Andhaka* and *Vetullavâda* schools criticized in the *Kathâvatthu*, the latter must be the immediate predecessors of Mahâyâna. The *Andhakas*, in turn, are regarded by Sâṅkṛtyâyana as an offshoot of the *Mahâsaṁghika* school that dominated the area of Amarâvatî and Dhyânakaṭaka in Andhra.[56]

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52 See Chang 1971, 29–47; Hirakawa 1990, 309.
53 Conze 1984, 668–669 (Ad in Gilgit ms.); Winternitz 1972, 313 and its n.4; Hirakawa 1987, 517–518.
54 VKN, p. 127.
55 VKN, pp. 131–221.
56 Sâṅkṛtyâyana 1934, 195–208. Other references in, Lamotte 1954, 386 n. 49. The *Prajñâpâramitâsûtras* themselves are almost unanimous about the south-

This theory has been accepted with only slight reservations by Edward Conze who also considers four additional arguments in favor of the southern origins of the *Prajñâpâramitâ*[57]. 1) According to some Tibetan sources, two subschools of the *Mahâsaṁghikas* (*Pûrvaśailas* and *Aparaśailas*), residing near Dhyânakaṭaka had a prototype of *Prajñâpâramitâ* in *Prâkṛt*; 2) the *Pûrvaśailas* spoke of *Dharmadhâtu* in the same sense as later Mahâyâna; 3) the Buddhology of the *Pûrvaśailas* prepared that of the Mahâyâna; 4) the great systematizer of the *Prajñâpâramitâ*, *Nâgârjuna*, came from Andhra.

To Lamotte, however, these arguments "*ne font pas impression*[58]." *Mahâsaṁghika* and Mahâyâna doctrines bear a resemblance to each other, that much is evident, but Andhra was not the only place where *Mahâsaṁghikas* flourished. They were found in Mathurâ, Bamiyân and Kaśmir as well.[59]

As to the Buddhology of the *Pûrvaśailas*, it may be noted that similar ideas were put forward by the *Mahâsaṁghika-Lokottaravâdins*[60] in their *Mahâvastu*, representing a sort of "docetic" Buddhology. Furthermore, the published inscriptions from Nâgârjunikoṇḍa bear no witness to Mahâyânist propaganda in Andhra in the third century AD. All schools mentioned represent Hînayâna. Because of these arguments, Lamotte concludes by stating that the Mahâyâna sprang up in the Kushan period in different parts of India, especially in the northwestern region and Khotan.[61]

According to Hirakawa, the dated Chinese translations of early Mahâyâna prove that Mahâyâna existed in Northern India at the end of the first century CE, some Sûtras being even from the first century BC. On the other hand, there is evidence of Mahâyâna existing in the South quite early as well.[62] I consider it reasonable for the time being to take sides with Hirakawa and accept this vague formulation as a working hypothesis.

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ern origins (e.g., Conze 1984, 327–328 (P); see MPPS, t. I pp. 24–26). The way of the *Prajñâpâramitâ* from south to east and then north is accepted by Moritz Winternitz (1972, 314).

57 Conze 1960, 9–12. Like Conze, Akira Hirakawa (1987, 518) thinks that most of the Sûtras were written in the South, although some texts may be of a northern origin.

58 Lamotte 1954, 387.

59 Lamotte 1954, 387–388.

60 From '*loka*' (world) and '*uttara*' (beyond).

61 Lamotte 1954, 388–389. Ronald Emmerick, dealing with the Kushanan influence on Buddhism, says that Mahâyâna may have arisen in cosmopolitan places like Gandhâra (in the North–West of India) (Emmerick 1987, 400–401).

62 Hirakawa 1990, 243, 247–252–254.

2.5. Presentation of the Sources

For the *Theravâdin* tradition I have used the *Tipiṭaka*, the formation of which has been discussed above. I have used the editions and translations of the *Pali Text Society*, providing references consistently to the Pâli text. Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated (reference being consistently given to the Pâli text). As the edition of the *Dhammasangaṇî* has not been at my disposal, I have used André Bareau's French translation.

The Pâli text of the *Dhammakâyassa Atthavaṇṇanâ* with its summary in French and English has been published by George Coedès. This short text is a summary of the Buddhist doctrine based largely on the *Visuddhimagga* and *Abhidhammathasaṅgaha*, and it consists of thirty paragraphs, each of which identify an element of the doctrine with the Buddha's body and clothing[63].

Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa* is a *Sarvâstivâdin/Vaibhâṣika* work written in Kaśmîr. According to the legend, *Vasubandhu* was *Asaṅga*'s brother who was converted to Mahâyâna at the age of 80. The Buddhist tradition has given *Vasubandhu* three different dates that are all counted in years after the Buddhas's nirvâṇa. In his biography of *Vasubandhu* and in some other works, *Paramârtha* says that *Vasubandhu* lived 1100 years after the nirvâṇa. *Xuanzang* estimates 1000 years, and 900 is given by *K'uei-chi* in *Paramârtha*'s commentary to *Maitreyanâtha*'s *Madhyântavibhâga*.[64]

As Frauwallner recognizes, the date of the nirvâṇa varies in Buddhist sources, and we have to take into account the date of the nirvâṇa which is used by each author. When this is done, we are in a position to say that, according to *Paramârtha* and *Xuanzang*, *Vasubandhu* lived in the 5th century, and according to *K'uei-chi* in the 4th.[65] Frauwallner solves this problem by supposing that there were, in fact, two *Vasubandhu*s. This is in his opinion "a certain fact".[66]

There is not a single word about *Asaṅga* in the second part of *Paramârtha*'s biography of *Vasubandhu*, so Frauwallner takes only the first and third parts to refer to *Vasubandhu* the elder, brother of *Asaṅga*. The second part tells us about *Vasubandhu* junior, author of the *Abhidharmakośa*. Only *Paramârtha* or his pupils have confused the two men, tak-

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[63] Coedès 1956, 254–259.

[64] Frauwallner 1951, 3–5.

[65] Frauwallner 1951, 7–10.

[66] Frauwallner 1951, 10–12. The supposition has received some criticism but seems to have been accepted by May (1971, 279, 294). Lamotte (in MASA-MG, II pp. vii–viii) mentions it as one possibility. Hirakawa (1990, 137), on the other hand, explicitly denies the existence of two Vasubandhus and dates the one and only Vasubandhu to the years 400–480.

ing them to be one.[67] *Vasubandhu* the elder would have lived c. 320–380, and the younger one from c. 400–480[68]. The older *Vasubandhu* was the brother of *Asaṅga* and son of *brâhmaṇa Kausika.* He lived in Puruṣapura and was originally a.*Sarvâstivâdin*[69].

Frauwallner has several arguments in favor of his thesis. First he notes that *Yasomitra* mentions in his commentary to the *Kośa* that a certain opinion in the *Kośa* was supported by an older *Vasubandhu (vṛddhâcârya-Vasubandhuḥ* and *sthaviro Vasubandhuḥ),* who lived before the author of the *Kośa.* In addition, *Yasomitra* explains that the "teachers of yore" (*pûrvâcâryâḥ*) mentioned in the *Kośa* mean *Asaṅga*, etc. So *Asaṅga* would be very old when compared to the author of the *Kośa*, i.e. to *Vasubandhu* junior; thus it follows that *Asaṅga* cannot be his brother.[70] This is also proven by the fact that *Kumârajîva* (c. 344–413) says in a postscript to his translation of the Lotus Sûtra that *Śûryasoma* had given him a book of *Vasubandhu* that was already famous at that time, i.e. in about the year 360[71].

Thus, the *Kośa* would be from the 5th century. It consists of verses presenting the *Vaibhâṣika* point of view and a commentary where *Vasubandhu* discusses other points of view and rejects them. There are several translations of the *Kośa* in Tibetan, Chinese and Uigur. A Sanskrit manuscript dating from the 12th or the 13th century was found in 1935 by Sâṅkṛtyâyana and published in 1967 by P. Pradhan. Louis de la Vallée Poussin's French translation, which I have used here was composed from Chinese and Tibetan sources supplemented by the Sanskrit text of part of the *kârikâ* as well as *Yaśomitra*'s *Sputârtha Abhidharmakośavyâkhyâ.* It was completed in 1931, and soon turned out to correspond almost word by word to the Sanskrit text.[72]

The *Mahâvastu* of the *Lokottaravâdin*s, written in Hybrid Sanskrit, is formally a part of the *Vinayapiṭaka* but it consists mostly of *Jâtaka*s in prose and verse. The core of the text must derive from the first century AD, although the text has been enlarged up to the fourth century. It may also contain some Mahâyânistic interpolations.[73] The Sanskrit text was edited by Émile Senart in three volumes in 1882–1897. My references are to the English translation by J.J. Jones.[74]

The *Aśokâvadâna* that seems to have been compiled in Mathurâ during the first century AD is a *Sarvâstivâdin* work in Sanskrit, and appears fragmentarily in the *Divyâvadâna.* It has also existed as a separate work

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67 Frauwallner 1951, 13–14, 17–18, 51.
68 Frauwallner 1951, 32, 46, 54–56.
69 Frauwallner 1951, 32.
70 Frauwallner 1951, 13, 21–22.
71 Frauwallner 1951, 34–35.
72 Lamotte in his preface to the new edition of la Vallée Poussin's translation of the *Kosa.*
73 Winternitz 1972, 239–247; Bareau 1955a, 38, 75–77.
74 See under MHV in bibliography.

which is proven by its two Chinese translations. The earlier of these translations was rendered into French by Jean Przyluski in 1923.[75] I have here referred to the English translation included in John Strong's book, *The Legend of King Aśoka*, and to Przyluski's French translation of the Chinese version (*A-yu-wang-tchouan*)[76].

Strong has used Sujitkumar Mukhopâdhyâya's 1963 published edition of the Sanskrit text because it is based on a larger number of manuscripts than Cowell's and Neil's edition of the *Divyâvadâna*, or Vaidya's re-edition of the latter. Mukhopâdhyâya has also taken into account the Chinese text.[77] There are, nevertheless, shortcomings in Mukhopâdhyâya's edition as de Jong has pointed out. Besides this, Strong's translation is plagued by mistakes, many of which are noted and corrected by de Jong.[78]

As to the Mahâyâna sources, the oldest of the *Prajñâpâramitâsûtra*s is the "Perfection of Wisdom in 8 000 lines" (*Aṣṭasâhasrikâprajñâpâramitâsûtra*), some parts of which date from the first century BC. The completion of this Sûtra, however, took over two centuries. Between 100 and 300 AD it was then expanded to a "Large Sutra of the Perfection of Wisdom" (*Mahâprajñâpâramitâsûtra*), today represented by versions in 18 000, 25 000, and 100 000 lines (*ślokas*). The only difference between these last three versions is the amount of certain repetitions. If, for instance, we have a statement: "form is emptiness and emptiness is form", the longest version first lists about 199 items that are emptiness, and after that declares form to be emptiness as well. The shorter versions omit certain items and go more immediately to the point.[79]

As the huge bulk of these large Sûtras turned out in due course to be difficult to master, shorter Sûtras and versified summaries were provided between the years 300 and 500. Thus were born the "Heart Sutra" (*Prajñâpâramitâhṛdayâsûtra*), the "Diamond Sutra" (*Vajracchedikâprajñâpâramitâsûtra*) and related texts as well as the *Abhisamayâlaṅkâra*. All these three texts mentioned date before the year 400 AD.[80]

I have referred to Edward Conze's English translation which mainly follows the version in 25 000 lines (*abhisamaya*s I–IV) adjusted to conform to the divisions of the *Abhisamayâlaṅkâra*[81]. In some passages, however, Conze has used the version in 100 000 lines[82], or adopted readings of the version in 18 000 lines[83] and of various Chinese translations.

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[75] Strong 1983, 16, 27–31; Lamotte 1958, 364.

[76] See under ASK in bibliography.

[77] Strong 1983, 169.

[78] de Jong 1986.

[79] Conze 1960, 9, 17–18; Winternitz 1972, 316.

[80] Conze 1960, 18–20.

[81] Manuscripts used are presented in Conze 1960, 42 (Conze 1984, ix). I have consistently indicated, in parentheses, to which version the reference is.

[82] P. Gosha's edition 1902–1923 and Ms. Cambridge Add. 1630.

[83] On editions, see Conze 1960, 45–46.

Some passages are based on Gilgit and Central Asian manuscripts of the Sûtras in 18 000 and 25 000 lines.[84] Besides this, I have used Conze's edition and translation of the Heart Sûtra[85].

The founder of the *Mâdhyamika* school, *Nâgârjuna*, who was active in the first centuries AD, was the first to collect the Mahâyâna Sûtras and systematize their teachings. According to *Bu-ston, Nâgârjuna* was a *brâhmaṇa* who came to Nâlandâ from Andhra in southern India. His immediate disciple was *Âryadeva*.[86] Translations used here are from the English translation of the *Mûlamadhayamakakârikâ* included in Frederick Streng's study, entitled *Emptiness*[87].

The teachings of the *Yogâcâra* or *Vijñânavâda* school are based, above all, on two Sûtras, viz. the *Saṁdhinirmocanasûtra* and the *Laṅkâvatârasûtra*[88]. The *Saṁdhinirmocanasûtra*, testifying to a transition from *Prajñâpâramitâ* to *Vijñânavâda*, is the oldest and one of the most important texts of this school[89]. According to Lamotte, it is constituted of passages formed during the second century, and was molded into its present form at the beginning of the third[90].

I have used the Tibetan edition and Lamotte's French translation from the Tibetan (xylographe no. 410 of Bibliothèque National). Besides this, there are two complete and three partial Chinese translations of this Sûtra. The original Sanskrit is lost, except for some citations.[91]

According to the legend, the *Vijñânavâda* school was founded by *Maitreyanâtha, Asaṅga* and *Vasubandhu*, a brother of the latter. The Tibetan tradition ascribes to *Asaṅga* the *Abhidharmasamuccaya* and the *Mahâyânasaṁgraha*. The *Mahâyânasûtrâlaṅkâra*, the *Madhyântavibhâga*, the *Dharmadharmatâvihâga*, the *Uttaratantra*, the *Abhisamayâlaṅkâra*, and the *Yogâcârarabhûmiśâstra* are ascribed to *Asaṅga* as inspired by *bodhisattva Maitreya*.[92]

The legend has it that *Maitreya* would in fact mean *Maitreyanâtha*, 'the one who is protected by *Maitreya*', and he would be a historical person. This is accepted by Erich Frauwallner, but rejected by David Ruegg

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84 Conze 1984, ix.

85 See under *Hrdayâ* in bibliography.

86 Murti 1980, 87–88; Ruegg 1981, 4–8, 50–54, 101; Lindtner 1982, 260–261. During the 6th century the *Mâdhyamikas* split into *Prâsaṅgikas* and *Svâtantrikas* represented by *Buddhapâlita* and *Bhâvaviveka*, respectively. In the 7th century *Dharmakîrti* and *Śântideva* reaffirmed the *Prâsaṅgika* position. (Murti 1980, 87; Ruegg 1981, 58–86.)

87 Streng 1967, 183–220. The Sanskrit text was published by Louis de la Vallée Poussin (see under MMK in bibliography; on this work, see Lindtner 1982, 24–29).

88 May 1971, 275, 277.

89 May 1971, 275–276.

90 Lamotte in SMD, p. 25. See May 1971, 276.

91 Lamotte in SMD, p. 8; May 1971, 275.

92 May 1971, 289–290.

who does not consider the *Maitreya* of the five works to be a historical person. Accordingly, these works would be compiled by *Asaṅga* on the basis of existing material.[93]

Jacques May accepts Frauwallner's chronology, and thus *Maitreya* is dated c. 300 AD and *Asaṅga* c. 315-390. We know that *Asaṅga* was a *brâhmaṇa* from Puruṣapura (Peshawar) and converted first to *Sarvâstivâda* Buddhism and then to Mahâyâna.[94]

I have here used *Asaṅga*'s *Mahâyânasaṁgraha*, "*la charte du bouddhisme idéaliste*", in Lamotte's French translation. The original Sanskrit text of this work is lost, and Lamotte's translation is based on the Tibetan and Chinese translations. Lamotte has consulted three sources: the *Mahâyânasaṁgraha* of *Asaṅga*, the *Mahâyânasaṁgrahabhâṣya* of *Vasubandhu* and the *Mahâyânasaṁgrahopanibandhana* of *Aśvabhâva*.[95]

In addition I have used *Vasubandhu* junior's *Trisvabhâvakârikâ* that has been published in romanized Sanskrit and in English translation by Fernando Tola and Carmen Dragonetti[96]. The original Sanskrit text was found in Nepal by Sylvain Lévi in 1928 and published by Susumu Yamaguchi in 1931, along with a Tibetan translation. In 1932–1933 de la Vallée Poussin again published the Sanskrit text with two Tibetan translations, in addition to his own French translation. In 1939 Mukhopâdhyâya, unaware of the earlier editions, published a Sanskrit version based on a Manuscript found by Guiseppe Tucci. It also included Tibetan and English translations and a selection of parallel texts.[97]

The differences between Lévi's and Tucci's manuscripts seem to be minor ones, but Tola and Dragonetti are of the opinion that they are, nevertheless, two separate manuscripts. The two Tibetan translations, however, are made of one and the same Sanskrit original. Tola and Dragonetti have used Yamaguchi's revised edition of Lévi's manuscript published in 1972–1973, except in some passages where they have followed another reading indicated in the notes.[98]

As to the Lotus Sûtra or *Saddharmapuṇḍarîka*, its early versions were completed in northern India around 250 AD, as the first Chinese translation is from the year 286. The core of the text, however, must derive from the first century AD because *Nâgârjuna* quotes it.[99] I have mainly used Kern's 1884 English translation that is based on palmleaf manuscripts from Dr. Wright's collection at the University of Cambridge[100]. As it is rather

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[93] See May 1971, 290–293; Ruegg 1969, 39–45, 50–55.
[94] May 1971, 279, 294 n. 79; Lamotte in MASAMG, II p. v.
[95] The manuscripts used are listed in MASAMG, I pp. v–vi.
[96] Tola & Dragonetti 1983, 248–257.
[97] Tola & Dragonetti 1983, 225.
[98] Tola & Dragonetti 1983, 225–227, 231.
[99] Winternitz 1972, 304; Hirakawa 1987, 520.
[100] Kern in Lotus, p. xxxviii.

outdated[101], I have also used Conze's partial translation included in his *Buddhist Scriptures*[102], providing references to both.

One of the central ideas in the Lotus is that the Hînayânists (*śrâvakas*), the Mahâyânists (*bodhisattvas*) and *pratyekabuddhas* (those enlightened by and for themselves only) are all in possession of an inherent buddha-nature[103]. This idea was then elaborated in some Sûtras[104] using the concept of '*Tathâgatagarbha*', 'the womb or germ of *Tathâgata*'[105].

The first systematic presentation of the *Tathâgatagarbha* doctrines is the *Ratnagotravibhâga Mahâyânottaratantraśâstra*, originally written in Sanskrit. The Sanskrit manuscripts, however, were found as recently as 1934 by Sâṅkṛtyâyana and edited by E.H. Johnston in 1950. Earlier this text was introduced to the West by Eugène Obermiller, who translated the Tibetan version into English in 1931. In the Tibetan version, the text is called an *Uttaratantra*. In Chinese it is referred to as a *śâstra*, and in a Sanskrit fragment in *Saka* script, it is called a *Vibhâga* ('analysis').[106] I have here referred to Jikido Takasaki's English translation based on Johnston's critical edition with some words and passages corrected on the basis of the Tibetan and Chinese versions[107].

Indo-Tibetan tradition attributes the verses of the *Ratnagotra* to *Maitreya* and the prose to *Asaṅga*, whereas the Sino-Japanese tradition ascribes the whole text to *Sâramati*. After first following the Indo-Tibetan tradition, western scholars have now (under the influence of Japanese scholarship) begun to regard *Sâramati* as the probable author of the text. He appears to have lived in the 3rd century AD, and was probably born in central India. *Sâramati* has also influenced the *Vijñânavâdin* idealism.[108]

The *Laṅkâvatârasûtra* is a much better known *Vijñânavâdin* text than the *Saṁdhinirmocanasûtra*. It appears to have been compiled during the third and fourth centuries and must have been completed before 443 when the first of the three Chinese translations was made. However, the chapters I, IX and X are missing there, but are included in later translations from the years 513 and 700–714. In addition to this, there exists one Tibetan translation.[109]

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101 As recognized by Edward Conze (1979, I 138) who has retranslated parts of this text in his *Buddhist Texts through the Ages* (1954) and *Buddhist Scriptures* (1959).

102 Lotus, Conze, pp. 197–211.

103 e.g. Lotus pp. 42–53.

104 I.e. *Tathâgatagarbha, Mahâyânâbhidharma, Anûnatvâpûrnatvanirdeśa, Aryaśrîmâlasûtra* and *Mahâyânasûtrâlaṅkâra*.

105 See Ruegg 1969, 31–35; Hirakawa 1987, 521–522.

106 Takasaki 1966, 5; May 1971, 281–282 and n. 38.

107 Takasaki 1966, 6.

108 May 1971, 281–284; Lamotte in VKN, p. 92 n. 2.

109 Winternitz 1972, 332–337; D.T. Suzuki in LNKV, p. xlii; May 1971, 277; Hamlin 1983, 311 n. 1.

I have here referred to Suzuki's English translation based on the Nanjio edition in Sanskrit published in 1923 and on two Chinese and Tibetan translations, supplemented by the Sanskrit-Chinese-English glossary in Suzuki's *Studies in the Laṅkâvatârasûtra*[110]. Suzuki says that he has not managed to interpret all passages satisfactorily and that he has in several cases used his own judgement. Moreover, the Nanjio edition is also said to require corrections.[111]

All this makes the translation rather unreliable, and one has to be particularly careful in each and every judgement concerning the text. On the other hand, this study proceeds comparatively and philosophically, and thus philological arguments vulnerable to the slightest incorrect reading of the original are used only occasionally.

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[110] Suzuki 1930, 375–458.

[111] Suzuki in LNKV, pp. xlviii–xlix. See also Hamlin 1983, 311. On the Chinese and Tibetan versions of the LNKV, see Suzuki 1930, 4–17.

3. BEING-IN-THE-WORLD AND MYSTICISM

3.1. Hînayâna Buddhism

3.1.1. The Background of Buddhism: Urbanization and individualism

As a founded religion,Buddhism had its start when the man we know as Gautama Buddha left his home for homelessness, and after a strenuous quest found the peace of mind referred to as his nirvâṇa or enlightenment (*bodhi*).

In leaving his home and entering the homeless state of a wanderer (*śramaṇa*), the Buddha, however, did not present an innovative solution to existential problems but followed an existing tradition. From the Upaniṣadic period onwards, many people had withdrawn from the village to the forest and formed schools of wandering almsmen (*parivrâjaka, bhikṣu*) and ascetics (*tâpasa*). They sought individual liberation from the ubiquitous suffering (*duḥkha*) that characterized every destiny one could think of in the 'worldly' reality known as the round of rebirths (*saṁsâra*).[1]

'Worldly' refers here to the ontical 'worldhood' of man's being, i.e. to the fact that man experiences his or her being as a being-in-the-world. In practice, however, this 'worldhood' does not appear to a person as something abstract because being always appears to us in and through something concrete that is. Thus, a person's being-in-the-world manifests itself as a being in a certain society, a certain culture and a certain ecological environment.

We may to some extent agree with Alan Watts that the liberation sought by the *śramaṇa*s meant liberation from the belief in the stability and authority of social institutions[2], because it is through these institutions that *saṁsâra* appears to us. Thus, the one who yearned for liberation from *saṁsâra* is told precisely to have "gone forth from home into homelessness". Since a house – as well as the human body – is a common symbol of the world or cosmos[3] the life of a householder serves here as a condensed image of the life in *saṁsâra* in general[4].

Being-in-the-world meant to the Buddhists being in *saṁsâra*, which again meant being inside the boundaries of the sociocultural system. As the monks or *bhikṣu*s withdrew from society, the Buddhist opposition lay-

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1 See, e.g., Gonda 1978, 283–289; Chakravarti 1987, 36–39; *Dîgha*, I 165–167.

2 Watts 1975, 9, 47–48.

3 See Eliade 1965, 145–151 Cf. also Douglas 1970 where it is examined how symbolism of the human body governs our attitudes towards mind and matter (p. xiii). In *Majj*, I 190 a dwelling and a body are compared as follows: "(j)ust as a space (*âkâsa*) that is enclosed by stakes and creepers and grass and clay is known as a dwelling, so a space that is enclosed by bones and sinews and flesh and skin is known as a body (*rûpa*)."

4 Collins 1982, 168.

man/monk can thus be said to some extent to parallel the opposition worldly/transcendent (*lokiya/lokottara*)[5].

Keeping in mind that on the experiental level, 'world' (*loka*) here refers to a subjectively constructed world[6], the escape from *saṁsâra* can be interpreted as an escape *from* the dualistic way of experiencing oneself as a solitary I in an objective world. Or, the other way round, it is an escape *to* a nondualistic understanding of one's being-in-the-world with no boundaries between 'me' and 'world'.

Thus it is characteristic to the ways of liberation of both Buddhists and other *śramaṇas* that great emphasis was put on the fate of one's inner essence or the self. In *Vedânta* this essence was called '*âtman*', a word that in the *Ṛgveda* had referred to the breath of life that separated a dead corpse from a living body. In being often used as a reflexive pronoun, too, the *âtman* of the *Vedânta* presents one's self as a sort of wandering soul whose ultimate destiny was to become merged in *Brahman*.[7]

The sociocultural background of this development towards asking such questions as: Who am I and what is my place in the world? is characterized by urbanization with its concomitants. The villages of the Ganges valley had begun to develop into fortified cities in the sixth century BC, but the peak of urbanization was reached in the fourth century, the century of the Buddha[8]. This development seems to have been made possible by the economic surplus reached through wet paddy cultivation, as suggested by R. S. Sharma, although D. D. Kosambi's view of the importance of the use of iron plough shares cannot be dismissed either[9].

Urbanism with its concomitant division of labour, trade and monetary economy, have all been seen as contributing to the rise of individualism[10]. According to Trevor Ling, the roots of Buddhism are in the negative aspects of this individualism: a loss of the sense of safety previously provided by the conformistic community, a painful concern about the meaning of life, growing aloneness and spiritual malaise.[11]

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5 Collins 1988, 105.

6 See below pp. 78–82. The word '*loka*' may even signify people as well as the world (May 1971, 268).

7 See Mahony 1987, 439–440; Collins 1982, 50.

8 Erdosy 1985, 96, 98.

9 See Gombrich 1988, 51–52; Chakravarti 1987, 18–19. Note that Buddhist texts know a myth where the emergence of organized society is explained by the beginning of wet paddy cultivation and private ownership (*Dîgha*, III 84–93. MHV, I 285–301; *Kosa*, ch. III 98; Rockhill 1884, 1–13. See Chakravarti 1987, 23–24).

10 Division of labour in Durkheim 1893, 385–395; monetary economy in Simmel 1923, 552–553 (his *Philosophie des Geldes* has not been at my disposal); and urbanism as such in Wirth 1938, 10–13.

11 Ling 1974, 37–52, 59–62. See Pyysiäinen 1988, 62–63. Cf. also, Collins 1988, 101–105, 121. Ling has borrowed the expressions 'growing aloneness' and 'malaise' from Erich Fromm (1942, 23).

With the Buddha's death placed roughly about 350 BC, the rise of Buddhism clearly took place in a period when urbanization had reached its peak in the Gangetic valley. Buddhism was "the product of the time of urban development, of urban kingship and the city nobles[12]." Its rise was contemporaneous with the introduction of monetary economy[13], division of labour[14], and the related way of experiencing one's being-in-the-world as painful (*duḥkha*).

3.1.2. A Person's Being-in-the-World

Buddhist schematic analyses of being-in-the-world

In "Hînayâna" sources, an individual and the world of *saṁsâra* belong essentially together as long as one has not attained nirvâṇa, a person's grasping (S. & P. *upâdâna*) to this world being the precise reason for his or her existence in *saṁsâra*. This being-in-the-world is analyzed in my sources into its basic units, using such formulations as the four noble truths, the net of mutual dependencies (S. *pratîtyasamutpâda*, P. *paticcasamuppâda*[15]), the five elements of existence (S. *skandha* P. *khandha*), and the constituents of the process of perception. All these lists, presented in diagram 4. on the next page[16], have some items in common

The four noble truths are as follows:

> This, o monks, is the noble truth of suffering (*dukkha*): birth is suffering, getting old is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering, living with unpleasant things is suffering, being separated from beloved things is suffering, and not getting what one wants is suffering. In short: the five modes of grasping[17] are suffering.
>
> This, o monks, is the noble truth of the origin of suffering: The cause of suffering is the thirst (*taṇhâ*) that leads to rebirths, the companion of passion that rejoices from this and that, namely the thirst for sense pleasures, the thirst for life and the thirst for destruction[18].

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12 As earlier described by Max Weber (1958, 204; see also 205–206, 215–216, 225–229). See also Basham 1971, 143–144; Chakravarti 1987, 19–23; Gombrich 1988, 50; Karttunen 1989, 30–31, 145, 154, 229 n.263.

13 See Chakravarti 1987, 20; Gombrich 1988, 51, 53. The introduction of coinage in India most probably took place during the fifth or fourth century BC (Karttunen 1989, 30–31).

14 A hypothetical reconstruction of the traditional Buddhist list of 18 guilds of artisans is given in Rhys Davids 1981. 90–96. See Chakravarti 1987, 22–23.

15 From '*pacceti*', 'to be grounded on something', 'to be something because of something', and '*samuppâda*', 'origin', 'arising', genesis', 'coming to be'.

16 The diagram is abstracted from a wealth of material impossible to quote here *verbatim*. The sources are presented in the following passages.

17 *Pañc'upâdânakhandhâ*, i.e. the five elements of existence.

18 The division of craving into three appears only in the Pâli version (Vetter 1988, 14 n.4).

Diagram 4. Buddhist analyses of being-in-the-world

The four noble truths

Everything is suffering
The reason for this is thirst
suffering ceases when thirst ceases
The way to this is the noble eight-fold path

The net of mutual dependencies

Because of ignorance (*avijjâ*), mental formations (*saṅkhârâ*)
Because of mental formations, cognition (*viññâṇa*)
Because of cognition, psycho-physicality (*nâmarûpa*)
Because of psycho-physicality, six spheres of sense (*saḷâyatana*)
Because of six spheres of sense, contact (*phassa*)
Because of contact, feeling (*vedanâ*)
Because of feeling, thirst (*taṇhâ*)
Because of thirst, grasping (*upâdâna*)
Because of grasping, becoming (*bhava*)
Because of becoming, birth (*jâti*)
Because of birth, aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, suffering, grief and depression

The elements of existence

material form (*rûpa*)
feeling (*vedanâ*)
mental representations (*saññâ*)
mental formations (*saṅkhârâ*)
cognition (*viññâṇa*)

The spheres of sense

eye – objects – visual cognition – contact – feeling
ear – sounds – auditory cognition – contact – feeling
nose – smells – olfactory cognition – contact – feeling
tongue – tastes – taste cognition – contact – feeling
body/skin – touches – bodily cognition – contact – feeling
conscious mind – mental representations – mental cognition – contact – feeling

> This, o monks, is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering: the cessation of suffering is the perfect cessation of the said thirst, its rejection, its renunciation, the cessation of thirst.
>
> This, o monks, is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering: the way leading to the cessation of suffering is the noble eightfold way, namely: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right meditation.[19]

The net of mutual dependencies[20] contains the same idea as the four noble truths: thirst causes suffering. It only goes one step further and ex-

[19] *Vin*, I 10. Tr. by I.B. Horner.

[20] e.g. *Vin*, I 1: "*avijjâpaccayâ saṅkhârâ, saṅkhârapaccayâ viññâṇaṁ, viññâṇapaccayâ nâmarûpaṁ, nâmarûpapaccayâ saḷâyatanaṁ, saḷâyatana-*

plains the reason for thirst to be in ignorance (of the four truths and of the nonexistence of 'self')[21] which causes one to grasp to the creations of his or her own mind, accompanied with feelings.

The net has often been understood as a causal chain, in which causes and effects follow each other, the first two components representing the past, the components 3–10 the present, and the rest the future. However, Rune Johansson has shown this to be a rather artificial interpretation, as we have different kinds of versions of this net, many of its components can be simultaneous, and its links do not imply a strict causality.[22] The net is on the one hand a description of human being-in-the-world and *Seinsverständnis*, and on the other an instrument to change one's *Seinsverständnis* by analyzing it into its components[23].

The four noble truths and the net of mutual dependencies reveal that the ubiquitous suffering is due to the interaction between an individual and the external world in the sense that an individual in a way creates his or her own world and then clings to it. This is also evident in the fact that the five elements of existence are called 'five modes of grasping' (*pañc' upâdânakhandhâ*).

The relationship between these five elements is as follows: the material shapes (*rûpa*) cause either a pleasant, an unpleasant or a neutral feeling (*vedanâ*) in the cognizant individual; to this feeling are attached mental representations (*saññâ*, S. *saṁjñâ*) connected to the sense data, and these are in turn accompanied by various kinds of mental formations (*saṅkhârâ*, S. *saṁskârâ*)[24]. All this is made possible by cognition (*viññâṇa*, S. *vijñâna*)[25] of external and mental phenomena.[26] When this process involves

paccayâ phasso, pahassapaccayâ vedanâ, vedanâpaccayâ taṇhâ, tanṇhâpaccayâ upâdânaṁ, upâdânapaccayâ bhavo, bhavapaccayâ jâti, jâtipaccayâ jarâmaranaṁ sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupâyâsâ saṁbhavanti. Evam etassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti."

21 See Frauwallner 1953, 184–216.

22 See Govinda 1975, 245–246; Collins 1982, 203. Johansson 1969, 77–79. Cf. also Goodman 1974, 100–101.

23 Cf. Johansson 1969, 65–84 and 1985, 162; Goodman 1974, 93–95.

24 There are four kinds of *saṅkhâras* (*Saṁyutta*, IV 293): those of body (inbreathing and outbreathing), of speech (directed and sustained thought [*vitakkavicâra*]), and of mind (mental representations and feeling). See also Rhys Davids & Stede 1972, 664–665, s.v. '*saṅkhâra*'; Johansson 1985, 41–46, Collins 1982, 202.

25 From '*jña*' ('to know') with the prefix '*vi*'. '*Vijñâna*' refers to discriminating knowledge and is usually translated as 'consciousness'. I have chosen the translation 'cognition' to avoid the connotation of a single organ which would be misleading as '*vijñâna*' signifies only the six kinds of cognition or consciousness related to the six senses. The sum total of the six *vijñânas* is the thinking mind (*citta*, see below p.82 n.32). This also makes it possible to translate '*manovijñâna*' as 'mental cognition' in the same manner as, for instance, '*cakṣurvijñâna*' is translated as 'visual cognition' (See also May 1971, 303 n. 98; Vetter 1988, 36 n.4).

26 *Samyutta*, III 59–61. See Lamotte 1958, 30; Vetter 1988, 36, n.4.

grasping (*upâdâna*) or thirst (*taṇhâ*), suffering is produced because all pleasant things are transitory and unpleasant ones are recurring (although *vice versa* as well).

Of the sensory process, we have various descriptions, the simplest one being that in which a distinction is made between six internal (*ajjhattika*) and external (*bâhira*) spheres of sense: the eye and seen forms, the ear and heard sounds, the nose and smelled smells, the tongue and tasted tastes, the body and felt touches, the conscious mind (*manas*) and cognized ideas (*dhammâ*)[27]. When to these are added the respective cognitions, we get the traditional list of 18 elements (*dhâtu*): the eye (*cakkhudhâtu*), the seen forms (*rûpadhâtu*), the visual cognition (*cakkhuviññâṇadhâtu*), the ear, etc.[28]

In some instances, the list continues with sensory contacts (*phassa*, S. *sparśa*), the related feeling (*vedanâ*), the formed mental representations (*saññâ*) and the related mental formations (*saṅkhârâ*), thirst (*taṇhâ*), the six elements[29] and the five elements of existence. According to *Saṁyutta* III 228–231 these are inevitably followed by suffering, illness, decay and death.[30]

Senses, the thinking mind and grasping

According to *Saṁyutta* II 72–73, the origin of the world of suffering is in the contact between the senses and material forms and the following sensory process[31], and *Saṁyutta* I 39 describes the world as produced by the thinking mind (*citta*)[32]:

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[27] e.g. *Dîgha*, II 302–303 where it is said that a monk considers ideas (*dhammâ*) from the point of view of the six internal and external spheres of sense, is aware of the bond (*samyojana*) arising on account of them, and puts these fetters aside.

[28] *Majj*, III 63.

[29] Earth, water, heat, air, space, and cognition.

[30] e.g. *Samyutta*, III 228–231 explaining the origins and cessation of suffering and death, and *Samyutta*, III 232–235 explaining how the exciting desire (*chandarâga*), residing in these, is a corruption of the thinking mind (*citta*). *Majj*, III 215–222 lists only the internal and external spheres of sense, and the related cognitions and contacts.

[31] *Samyutta*, II 72–73: "Because of sight and visible objects, visual cognition arises. Contact is the clash of these three, and feeling is conditioned by the contact. Thirst is then conditioned by the feeling. This, o monks, is the arising of suffering. And because of hearing and audible objects etc."

[32] '*Citta*' is usually translated as 'mind' but strictly speaking it refers to thoughts (from the root *cit*–, 'to think'). It is not an entity that thinks but only refers to acts of knowledge; it is the series of cognitions (*vijñâna*s) (Tola & Dragonetti 1983, 233). To make a distinction between it and '*manas*' ('mind'), I have rendered '*citta*' as 'thinking mind' and '*manas*' as conscious mind.

Its thoughts (*citta*) are that whereby the world is led,
And by its thoughts it ever plagues itself,
And thought it is above all other things
That bringeth everything beneath its sway.[33]

This could be understood to mean that man forms the idea of world, i.e. realizes his or her (painful) being-in-the-world, as he intellectually interprets his sensory experience[34]. The interest of the early Buddhists has clearly centered on the *world as experienced by men*, although this does not necessarily mean that they would have denied the existence of an objective world[35]. They only felt no need to discuss the world apart from someone who experiences it.[36] Their world is not an objective or natural world, but the world in which man experiences his or her own being. This world is a world of suffering in which an individual forms an idea of a 'self' in relation to various 'worldly' predicates which will always turn out to be unsatisfactory (*duḥkha*).

As we have seen, the reason for this unsatisfactoriness is in man's thirst and grasping. Thus, the sense organs or their objects are not "fetters" as such, but the exciting desire (*chandarâga*) that arises on their account is a fetter[37]. The exciting desire that inheres in the sensory process, is, for its part, a corruption of the thinking mind[38]:

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[33] *Samyutta*, I 39. Tr. by Carolina Rhys Davids & Sûriyagoda Sumangala Thera. According to *Kosa*, t. V p. 142, matter (*rûpa*) is born of the thinking mind (*citta*) because it is based on "impregnations" (*vâsanâ*) residing in the thinking mind.

[34] In *Kosa*, t. I p. 110, it is said that the support (*âśraya*) of the thinking mind is the six sense organs. *Samyutta*, III 232–235 explains the exciting desire, residing in the sensory process, to be a corruption of the thinking mind. Thus, the thinking mind is the organizer of the sensory input and conscious life, and on it is based the experience of personal continuity (see Johansson 1969, 30–33, 83, 131 and 1985, 158–161).

[35] See May 1971, 268. Rune Johansson (1985, 27–29, 33, 36, 51, 79–80, 83, 85) takes the view that conscious and material processes were to the early Buddhists two aspects of the same reality.

[36] According to Christian Lindtner (1982, 271 and its n. 240), we cannot (from the Buddhist outlook) really distinguish between subjective and objective. This is evident, e.g. in such words as '*artha*' ('object' *and* 'meaning'), '*prapañca*' ('universe' *and* 'language') and '*upalabdhi*' ('exist' *and* 'perceive').

[37] *Samyutta*, IV 283, "... the eye is not a fetter to objects, and objects not a fetter to the eye. It is the exciting desire (*chandarâga*), arising because of these two, that is the fetter." Also, *Dîgha*, II 302–303.

[38] *Samyutta*, III 232–235: "Monks, the exciting desire (*chandarâga*) that is in the eye is a corruption of the thinking mind. The exciting desire that is in the ear etc." *Ang*, I 10: "This mind, monks, is luminous, but it is defiled by taints that come from without; that mind, monks, is luminous, but it is cleansed of taints that come from without (tr. by F.L. Woodward)." See Johansson 1969, 30; 1985, 159–160. See Johansson 1969, 42–44; May 1971, 268–270.

> For a long, long time this thinking mind has been soiled (*saṁkiliṭṭhaṁ*) by desire, hatred and delusion. By impurities of the thinking mind (*cittasaṁkilesâ*), o monks, beings are soiled. By purity of the thinking mind, beings are purified.[39]

Consequently, thirst and grasping are not necessary concomitants of the sensory process, but are due to man's reasoning. This is also obvious in the fact that the reason for thirst is said to be ignorance.

This presupposes a distinction between mere sensations and conscious and conceptualized experience, which the early Buddhists seem to have made[40]. In *Saṁyutta* IV 209 and 231, a differentiation between bodily (*kâyika*) and mental (*cetasika*) feelings is made[41], and in the *Kośa* this is expressed even more clearly as follows:

> As a general rule, the mental sensation – pleasant or unpleasant – proceeds from a concept (*vikalpa*), a concept of 'dear', 'disgusting', etc. As to the bodily sensation, ... it is produced by an external object, independently from a psychological state.[42]

On the other hand, it is not only some feelings that produce suffering but *all feeling* (following cognition and contact, as we have seen). Says the first book of the *Vedanâsaṁyutta*:

> Collected, 'ware, the mindful follower
> Of the Awakened One well understands
> Feelings, and how they come to be, and where
> They cease, and what the way to feelings' end.
> That brother who hath ended them, therefor
> No longer hungereth. He is set free.[43]

And:

> Pleasure or pain or feeling that is neither,
> The inner and the outer, all that's felt –
> He knows to be Ill.[44]

The last quotation contains the traditional division of feeling into three, there being pleasant, painful and neutral feelings[45]. The respective right attitudes are as follows:

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[39] *Samyutta*, III 151.

[40] Both being called 'feelings' (*vedanâ*).

[41] *Samyutta*, IV 209: "A monk ... feels one feeling, the bodily one, but not the mental one." Also IV 231.

[42] *Kosa*, t. I p. 115.

[43] *Samyutta*, IV 204. Tr. by F.L. Woodward

[44] *Samyutta*, IV 205. Tr. by F.L. Woodward

[45] *Majj*, I 396: "The Beatific One has, o householder, spoken of three feelings: pleasant, painful and neither pleasant nor painful feeling. These, o householder, are the three feelings spoken of by by the Beatific One." *Samyutta*, IV 204: "There are these three feelings, o monks. What Three? Pleasant feeling, painful feeling, and feeling that is neither pleasant nor painful."

> The lurking tendency to lust for pleasant feeling, brethren, must be abandoned. The lurking tendency to repugnance for painful feeling must be abandoned. The lurking tendency to ignorance of feeling that is neither pleasant nor painful must be abandoned.[46]

As pleasant feelings lead to suffering, painful feelings are a nuisance, and neutral feelings are transitory, "(w)hatsoever is felt, that is joined with suffering"[47]. From the psychological point of view, we could say that if one deliberately denies his or her unpleasant feelings, he or she necessarily cuts out positive feelings as well, because the ability to feel is a dialectical unity. Pain and pleasure belong in this sense together, and you cannot have one without the other. This has been emphasized, e.g., by Arthur Janov[48], the creator of primal therapy[49].

Because feelings arise from the sensory "contacts", one should turn away from the senses, their objects, the corresponding cognitions and contacts, in order to free himself or herself from feelings that always involve suffering:

> Dependent on the eye and object arises visual cognition. The union of these three is contact. Dependent on contact is feeling. So seeing, the well-taught Ariyan disciple is repelled by the eye, by objects, by visual cognition, by visual contact, and by feeling. Being repelled by them, he lusts not for them. Not lusting he is set free.[50]

Like the the sensory process leads to suffering, grief and death, so its reversal leads to the disappearance of suffering, grief and death[51]. Because feeling comes from the contact between a sense organ and the respective object, the cessation of feeling comes from the cessation of contacts[52]. However, feeling does not come automatically from contact, but from the related thirst[53]. For this reason, the cessation of contact and feeling comes ultimately from the abandoning of the exciting desire[54].

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46 *Samyutta*, IV 205. Tr. by F.L. Woodward. The painful feelings, however, should not be sought after, only tolerated.

47 *Samyutta*, IV 207, 216. *Samyutta*, IV 233: "The misery of feeling is the impermanence, the pain, the unsubstantial nature of feeling."

48 Janov 1970, 274.

49 Although Janov has been both harshly criticized and simply ignored in academic circles (Torrey 1976; Videgård 1984, 3), primal therapy has strong affinities with the so-called object relations theory in psychiatry and to the trauma theory of early Freud (Videgård 1984, 4, 16). Despite its shortcomings, primal therapy has an important technique of centering on feelings to offer (Videgård 1984, 280, 287–288, 293).

50 *Samyutta*, IV 32–33.

51 *Samyutta*, III 228–231; *Dîgha*, II 72–73.

52 *Samyutta*, IV 220: "By the arising of contact comes the arising of feelings. By the ceasing of contact comes the ceasing of feelings."

53 *Samyutta*, IV 233: "From the arising of contact comes the arising of feelings. Thirst is the way leading to the arising of feelings."

54 *Samyutta*, IV 233: "The abolishing of the exciting desire, the abandoning of the exciting desire, – that is the escape from feelings."

Perhaps the most drastic expression of this is the so-called fire sermon. In it the Buddha taught that the sense organs, their objects, the related cognitions and contacts as well as feelings were burning by the fire of craving, hatred and ignorance, because of birth, aging, death, sorrow, bewailing, suffering and mourning. For this reason one was to turn away from the senses and their objects[55].

The ideas that suffering comes from one's clinging to the transitory world through the medium of senses, and that this is precisely what the life of a "householder" is about, are in the *Suttapiṭaka* the immediate background of the Buddha's dissatisfaction with the everyday way of experiencing one's being-in-the-world. His leaving home for homelessness is given three reasons:

1) He suddenly realized the deceptive (*âdînava*) nature of sense pleasures and wanted to find another kind of joy[56].

2) He realized that he was subject to aging, illness and death[57], and that birth, aging, illness, death, sorrow and suffering[58] were deceptive, unlike nirvâṇa which meant "excellent freedom from bondage"[59].

3) He experienced the life of a householder as distressing, unlike the life of a homeless wanderer living outdoors[60].

We may summarize this into four binary oppositions as follows:

life of a householder and desires / ascetic life
existence in *saṁsâra* / liberation from the existence in *saṁsâra*
sense pleasures / "the other joy"
birth, aging, illness, death, sorrow, suffering / "excellent freedom from bondage" in *nibbâna*

The first two oppositions are *Brâhmanic*-Buddhist expressions of the nature of man's being-in-the-world and of the hope of overcoming its everyday character. The latter two oppositions describe more closely these two alternatives, expressing how pleasures of the five senses are connected to household life to the extent that leaving home means precisely leaving sensual pleasures[61].

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55 *Vin*, I 34–35.
56 *Majj*, I 504–505.
57 *Ang*, I 145–146.
58 According to Bareau (1963, 97–88) '*saṅkilesa*' means here 'suffering' and not 'impurity' as in later Buddhism.
59 *Majj*, I 162–163.
60 *Majj*, I 240. *Suttanipâta*, III.1.2. adds that the homes of householders were "nests of desires".
61 Collins 1982, 169.

3.1.3. The Concept of Self is Misleading

The idea of not-self (anâtman)

As is well known, Buddhism fights the suffering related to craving and its frustration not by postulating an immutable self destined for eternal happines in the hereafter, but by denying even a 'wordly' self as an entity (Skr. *anâtman*, Pâli *anattâ*). What this denial precisely means is not so clear. Steven Collins takes the Pâli '*attâ*' as simply a reflexive pronoun and accepts K. R. Norman's view that '*anattâ*' thus should not be translated as 'no-soul'. Instead, it means to the religious virtuosis that man has no eternal self – whatever it might be. And to the ordinary people, it is only a symbol of an opposition to Brahmanism.[62]

David Snellgrove, however, is of the opinion that the early Buddhists did not know the Upaniṣadic conception of *âtman* at all, and that *âtman* thus was to them only an animistic principle that was found in trees and rocks as well as in human beings. It was this kind of *âtman* that the Buddha denied in his first sermon, not an intelligent self longing for unification with *Brahman*.[63] On the other hand, Vetter takes Upaniṣadic influence for granted and regards *anâtman* as a "'logical' reaction to the theory of a 'person'"[64].

I myself should like to argue from a religion-phenomenological point of view that *âtman* as self, and *âtman* as soul are not two alternatives from which we should choose. In Finno-Ugric languages, for instance, two kinds of souls were known: In Finnish, '*henki*' ('breath', 'spirit') was identified with breathing and was believed to be the vital principle that separated a cold dead corpse from a warm living body; and the reflexive pronoun '*itse*' ('self') referred to a conscious self that was a kind of soul.[65] *Âtman* was believed to withdraw deep into the body during sleep so that no sensory data could reach consciousness; in the same manner a passed-out drunk was said to be *itsetön*, i.e. 'selfless'[66].

As the Indian notions seem to bear a phenomenological structure similar to the Finno-Ugric ones, we may be entitled to see *âtman* as a sort of "self-soul". As such, it would be at the same time a psychological self and an ontological soul-principle. The classical passage where the Buddha denies the existence of this kind of a soul in the *khandhas* runs as follows:

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62 Collins 1982, 12, 71–77, 94–103.

63 Snellgrove 1987, 20–22. Cf. Ruegg 1989, 20 and its n.5.

64 Vetter 1988, 39–43.

65 Pentikäinen 1985, 133–135.

66 Pentikäinen 1985, 134. I want to stress that this comparison is purely phenomenological and does not presuppose any genetic connection.

> Body, monks, is not self. Now were this body self (*attâ*), monks, this body would not tend to sickness, and one might get the chance of saying in regard to body, 'Let body become thus for me, let body not become thus for me'. But inasmuch, monks, as body is not self, therefore body tends to sickness, and one does not get the chance of saying in regard to body, 'Let body become thus for me, let body not become thus for me'.

Similarly the Buddha denied that feelings, mental representations (*saññâ*), mental formations (*saṅkhârâ*) or cognition could be one's self.[67] But does this mean that the five *khandha*s could not be the self because they "tended to sickness", or because they did not obey one's commands?

As it is a bit awkward to say that mental representations or mental formations "tend to sickness", it would be better to take sickness here as only an example of the fact that our being-in-the-world is not always as we would like it to be. Thus, in a way, both explanations lead to the same conclusion: there is no self in the *khandha*s because they do not obey all our commands. Illness is only one manifestation of the transitoriness of 'worldly' being that is always "being unto death", and as such something different from what we would like it to be.

That this transitoriness is the real point here becomes clear as the Buddha proceeds to explain that the five elements (*khandha*s) could not be *attâ* because they obviously were transitory (*aniccaṁ*), and all that is transitory is of necessity painful (*dukkhaṁ*).[68] Likewise, when asked whether there could be a case where one suffered because nothing permanent was found within oneself, the Buddha replied that indeed there was.[69]

Namely, when one thinks: "The universe is the self, I shall be that after death, permanent, abiding, everlasting, unchanging, and I shall exist as such for eternity," one becomes distressed on hearing the Buddhist message. Then one thinks: "I will be annihilated, I will be destroyed, I will be no more," and one is bewildered and tormented by anxiety.[70]

This passage reveals clearly a tendency to identify one's real self with the Absolute, or *Brahman*. Contingent and transitory 'worldly' attributes will not do; and one wants to find within oneself something eternal and necessarily existing. But according to the text, the Buddha considered such an idea "wholly and completely foolish"[71].

Although in the previously cited passage the Buddha denied that the self could be (in) any of the *khandha*s, it, of course, does not *logically* follow that there then is no self at all. The existence of the self is nowhere in the *Vinaya*- and *Suttapiṭaka*s directly denied, as Joaquín Pérez-Remón

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67 *Vin*, I 13–14. The translation is I. B. Horner's.
68 *Vin*, I 14.
69 *Majj*, I 136–137.
70 Ibid.
71 *Majj*, I 138.

and Vetter remark[72]. Its non-existence, however, seems to be presupposed in passages like the following one:

Monk *Khemaka* was asked whether he saw any self in the five *khandhas*, and he answered that he did not. "Then you must be enlightened," the monks reasoned, but *Khemaka* firmly denied this. He had a clear feeling "I am" with regard to the *khandhas* even though he did not clearly see this "I am". It was neither body, feeling, mental representations, mental formations, cognition nor anything outside them. Yet he had this feeling "I am".[73] Thus 'I am' is a vague experience for which no objective basis can be found. Moreover, the cessation of this experience is taken to lead to enlightenment.

But on the other hand, when *Vacchagotta* asked whether there was a self or whether there was no self, the Buddha remained silent. Then he explained to *Ânanda* that if he had said that there was a self, he would have subscribed to the eternalist view; and if he had said that there was no self, he would have taken the annihilationist view. And, says the Buddha, such theoretical explanations would only "have been a greater confusion to the already confused *Vacchagotta*".[74]

Beyond self and not-self

But why did the Buddha not say that there is no self, and that this does not mean annihilation because there is from the outset nothing to be annihilated? It is, as Vetter remarks, "a remarkable feature in view of the history of ideas in India"[75] that the Buddha left the question 'is there a self?' thus unanswered.

As a matter of fact, the Buddhist tradition knows ten (in Pâli *Nikâyas* and in the Chinese *Madhyamâgama*) or 14 (in e.g. the *Kośa*, most Chinese *âgamas* and the MPPS) questions never answered by the Buddha[76]. However, they do not include the question 'is there a self?', although they imply a position regarding this question as well. I quote here from the MPPS, which may be said to bring to the fore the point inherent in the Pâli tradition[77]:

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[72] Pérez–Remón 1980, 193; Vetter 1988, 41. According to Pérez-Remón (1980, 38, 85, 156–160, 164, 195, 222–227), the idea of *anattâ*, in showing what is not *attâ*, reveals the true self as an existing thing. Vetter (1988, 39 n.8, 41 n.10) does not share this conclusion.

[73] *Samyutta*, III 126ff. After this conversation *Khemaka*, however, was enlightened.

[74] *Samyutta*, IV 400–401. See also *Kosa*, t. V p. 265.

[75] Vetter 1988, 41.

[76] The sources are gathered in Lamotte's n.1 on p. 154 of his translation of the MPPS. See also Collins 1982, 131–132.

[77] Collins 1982, 283 n.1.

Are the world and the self eternal?
Are they not eternal?
Are they both eternal and not eternal?
Are they neither eternal nor not eternal?
Do the world and the self have an end?
Do they not have an end?
Do they both have and have not an end?
Do they neither have nor not have an end?
Does a *Tathâgata*[78] exist after death?
Does he not exist after death?
Does he both exist and not exist after death?
Does he neither exist nor not exist after death?
Is the soul (*jîva*) the same than the body (*charîra*)?
Is the soul different from the body?[79]

According to the MPPS, the Buddha did not answer these questions because they were futile[80]. In *Saṁyutta* IV 394, the Buddha says that the views in the unanswered questions are expressions of regarding the self and the *khandhas* in one of the four ways, which implies that he did not want to share any of these possibilities. Collins takes this to mean that the Buddha could not answer these questions because they were "linguistically ill-formed", like the question: 'Is the present king of France bald?' Any answer given to these questions "would necessarily confirm the misleading presupposition that such terms do refer to some real and permanent individual".[81]

It is easy to see that in the case of the king of France, a simple 'yes' or 'no' as an answer would indeed "confirm" that the king exists, i.e. the answer has meaning only with regard to such a possible world where the extension of 'present king of France' is not empty[82]. Thus, the question is not syntactically ill-formed as such, only its relevance is dependent on certain semantic conditions (whether the king exists or not). However, these can be specified in language by saying, for example, that the question is meaningless because there is no present king of France.

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78 This epithet of the Buddha originally referred to somebody who would no longer be reborn, who was "thus-gone" ([*tathâ-gata*] Vetter 1988, 8 n.2). On the other hand, it could also mean 'he who here has come' (*tathâ-agata*), referring to the Buddha as he appeared to the five ascetics after his enlightenment. I take it here to refer to any of the *Tathâgatas* (Lamotte translates "le saint affranchi du désir").

79 MPPS, t. I p. 155. The Pâli texts provide four alternatives only in the *Tathâgata*-question, with the other three questions having only the first two alternatives (is, is not). All versions do not contain 'self' besides 'world'. On this "fourcornered" (*catuṣkoti*) approach, see Raju 1954 and Vetter 1988, 54–57.

80 MPPS, t. I p. 155: "Ces questions sont vaines et c'est pourquoi le Buddha n'y a pas répondu."

81 Collins 1982, 133. He borrows the king-example from Ninian Smart.

82 See above n.38 on p. 21.

Now Collins thinks that like asking whether the present king of France is bald presupposes that the king exists, so asking whether the self is eternal or not presupposes that the self exists. Thus the Buddha would have refused to answer such questions at all because he was of the opinion that the self did not exist. But why did he (or whoever is responsible for the relevant passages) not say that the question was meaningless because no self existed? Why did he respond to *Vacchagotta*'s questions by stating that to say "the self exists" means eternalism and to say "the self exists not" means annihilationism? And why would the statement 'the self exists not' lead to annihilationism?

One gets the impression that the Buddha (or whoever is responsible for this passage) somehow considered the question 'does the self exist' ill-formed, too. If it were ill-formed in the same way as the question about the king, it would amount to the following formulation: It would be meaningful to ask whether the self exists or not, only if the self existed (which it does not). This is because in the king's case the relevance of the attribute (baldness) was dependent on the subject's (king) existence, and in the *anattâ*-case the subject's (self) existence *is* the attribute whose relevance is dependent on the subject's existence[83].

From this example we get the general premise that non-existence can be predicated only on something that has previously existed. In other words, nothing could be said to be non-existent *in principle*[84]. Thus it would be meaningful to say "the self does not exist" only if it had previously existed. Although this principle would very well explain why the statement 'the self does not exist' would imply annihilationism, I find it unconvincing without further proof. From this it would follow that everything one could name and make up should of necessity have existed at least at some point in time. Moreover, to the *Prajñâpâramitâsûtra*s this definitely does not apply (but of course their ontology is different in any case).

It seems more likely that the Buddha (or the early Buddhists) considered the question 'Is there a self' not so much ill-formed but vain and futile (like the MPPS says) and, especially, harmful to one's progression in his or her way towards enlightenment. The Buddha could have given (or have been made to give in the text) an answer to *Vacchagotta*, but he consciously wanted to direct *Vacchagotta*'s attention away from such philosophical disputes and discursive reasoning. He acted like a father who meets his little son's repeated requests for candy with silence in the hope that the boy would forget the whole thing when given no answer.

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[83] I can find no objection to taking existence as an attribute although Kant and his followers have rejected the ontological proof of God's existence by saying that existence is not an attribute.

[84] As in Europe before nominalistic philosophy, nothing could be said to be possible in principle, but only in the sense that it had existed sometimes, or happened or will sometime exist or happen.

This conclusion can be drawn from the parable of a man wounded by an arrow[85] who only wants to get healed and is not interested in speculation on who shot the arrow, with what kind of a bow etc. Such speculation is possible and it can be linguistically quite well-formed, but it is not relevant for the wounded man in his difficult situation and would only hinder his healing by taking time from more urgent measures. Collins also admits that such speculation is rejected as harmful but he seems to think that the harmfulness depends on the speculation taking place on mistaken premises[86]. In my opinion, this is not essential.

What is essential is that the Buddha (and/or the early Buddhists) wanted to shift the emphasis from philosophical speculation for its own sake to man's experiencing, and to speculation that could be directly applied to pragmatic purposes[87]. In such circumstances, words like 'I' or 'self' are means of referring to oneself as a whole, not ways of referring to some most intimate quality of oneself[88]. Such words are necessary in language, but it is in vain that people construct metaphysical theories upon them. In later Buddhism, where the existence of the self is explicitly denied[89], a distinction between conventional and ultimate truth has been drawn to explain why we have to use words like 'self' and 'person' even though no self exists[90].

Thus the Buddha's answer to the mystical quest for the true inner self seems not so much to be a blunt negation but an attitude of indifference. This is well documented in the *Suttanipâta*'s *Aṭṭhakavagga*, which contains an old tradition that, according to Vetter, existed "before or alongside the first Buddhist teaching and community." A little later this tradition was integrated into Buddhism and combined with the teachings of the Buddha.[91]

According to this tradition, one should avoid the three modes of self-conceit through which one takes himself or herself as either equal, super-

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85 *Majj*, I 429ff.

86 Collins 1982, 137: "What is rejected is harmful speculation based on mistaken premises."

87 See also Staal 1989, 414–415.

88 See *Kosa*, t. V p. 262: "Si le Pudgala n'est qu'un mot servant à désigner les cinq éléments, pourquoi Bhagavat n'a-t-il pas déclare que le principe vital (*jîva*) est le corps?"

89 e.g. *Kosa*, t. II p. 56: "L'*âtman* n'existe pas." T. V p. 230: "Il n'y a pas de délivrance en dehors de (bouddhisme), car les autres doctrines sont corrompues par une fausse conception du 'moi'." T. V p. 231: "Parce qu'aucune preuve n'établit l'existence d'un moi indépendant des éléments ..." T. V p. 232: "En ce qui concerne un moi indépendant des éléments, ni évidence, ni induction. – Nous savons donc qu'un moi réel n'existe pas." This doctrine is the "only way to the city of nirvâṇa" (t. V p. 301).

90 See below p. 107.

91 Vetter 1988, 101.

ior or inferior to other people[92], and "abstain from disputes, for the only aim (of them) is praise and profit[93]." And,

> If any have taken up a view (*diṭṭhi*) and dispute, and say, "Only this is true," then say to them, "There will be no opponent for you here when a dispute has arisen."[94]

Congruent to this:

> "Mâgandiya," said the Blessed One, "nothing has been grasped by (me) from among the (doctrines), after consideration, (saying) 'I profess this'. But looking among the (doctrines), not grasping, while searching I saw inner peace."[95]

That the liberation taught by the Buddha is beyond all dualistic thinking is especially clearly expressed in the following passage:

> "One says that purity is not by view, by learning, by knowledge, or even by virtuous conduct and vows, Mâgandiya," said the Blessed One. "Not by absence of view, of learning, of knowledge, of virtuous conduct, or vows, not by that either. And discarding these, without grasping, calmed, nor dependent, one would not long for existence.[96]"

In this way the part of the self in the mystical experience has been given only a minimum of interpretation, and the experience of emptiness following the prolonged quest for an unempirical self is accepted without ideas of unification where the self would be altered to a mode of the Infinite. The earliest tradition seems to have remained totally indifferent towards interpreting the nature of the self, or, in other words, it has been beyond self and not-self[97].

Later, when the existence of a self is more clearly denied, experiencing a break of the barrier between an individual and the world has been understood to mean that the illusion of a self has ceased and the self is realized to be a natural part of the external world[98]. Thus, one steps out of ordinary I-consciousness so that his or her experiencing is no longer organized by an I but seems to be organized from the outside or by itself.

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92 *Suttanipâta*, 4:842, 918, 954.

93 *Suttanipâta*, 4:828 (*Pasûrasutta* which on the whole underlines this same conviction). Ibid., 4:844: "(A) sage would not engage in disputatious speech with the people."

94 *Suttanipâta*, 4:832 (*Pasûrasutta*). This and the following two translations by K.R. Norman.

95 *Suttanipâta*, 4:837 (*Mâgandiaysutta*).

96 *Suttanipâta*, 4:839 (*Mâgandiaysutta*).

97 See also Staal 1989, 414–415.

98 This seems to be reflected even in the unanswered questions where self and world are grouped together in the first two sets. Note also that the denial of self is logically equivalent to the identification of the self with the external world (Pyysiäinen 1986, 91; Loy 1986, 15). *Kosa*, t. V p. 230: "Par la force de la croyance à ce moi naissent les passions; la révolution de la triple exist-

3.1.4. The Compounded and Uncompounded Realities

Theravâda

According to early Buddhist cosmology, the phenomenal reality is compounded (*saṅkhata*) of elements called *dharmas*[99]. They form the real basis of both the external and internal realities of men. The phenomenal superstructure we have constructed from our ordinary sense data is erroneously superimposed upon the reality of *dharmas*.[100]

According to the *Theravâdins*, there are 81 compounded *dharmas* that have the characteristics of arising, changing and passing away[101]. They are classified into three categories: 1) 28 material forms (*rûpa*) like the four elements and six senses, 2) 52 ethically good, bad or neutral psychological factors related to the thinking mind (*citta*) and cognition (*viññâṇa*), and 3) the pure thinking mind as such. All these *dharmas* are real entities with an essence of their own (Skr. *svabhâva*), despite being transitory (*anicca*). In a way they are at the same time causes and effects in the continual becoming of the world of *saṁsâra*.[102]

Behind the compounded reality, however, there is an uncompounded reality:

> "There is, o monks, a supranormal (*abhûtaṁ*)[103], an unborn, a not made and an uncompounded (*asaṅkhata*), because, o monks, if there were not this supranormal, unborn, not made and uncompounded one would not

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ence, ou cercle des trois sphères, se poursuit; la délivrance est impossible." The cause of this notion of 'I' is said (*Kosa*, t. V p. 292) to be the defiled thinking mind in which the idea of 'I' is superimposed upon the series of thoughts.

99 Literally the word '*dharma*' means 'bearer' or 'supporter' and, from the *Ṛgveda* onwards, also 'Law' or 'Eternal Order' (Mayrhofer 1963, II 95; see Carter 1978, 112), and in Buddhism specifically the Law revealed by the Buddha. In Buddhism, these two meanings are so related that the 'bearers' or 'elements of reality' are regarded as conditioned by the Law (Glasenapp 1938, 385).

100 See Snellgrove 1987, 22–23. The *Suttapiṭaka* presupposes a *dharma* theory similar to that of the *Abhidhammapiṭaka* although it is not explicitly worked out in the *Sûtras*. Only in the *abhidharma* the *dharmas* of the *Suttas* are classified to a restricted number of irreducable constituents of reality. (Glasenapp 1938, 408–409.)

101 *Ang*, I 152. Cf. *Kosa*, t. I pp. 150, 222.

102 See Lamotte 1958, 658–662, 665; Glasenapp 1938, 408. The *Sarvâstivâdins*, however, counted only 72 compounded *dharmas* in same three categories with slightly different contents (Lamotte 1958, 662–663. See also Rosenberg 1924, 120–140). The *Lokottaravâdins* of the *Mahâsaṁghikas*, on their part, denied the reality of worldly (*laukika*) *dharmas* and regarded only transcendent (*lokottara*) *dharmas* as real (Bareau 1955a, 76).

103 See Rhys Davids & Stede 1972, 60; cf. Bareau 1951, 18 and 21 n. 25.

> know an exit (*nissaraṇa*) from what is born, produced (*bhûta*), made and compounded."[104]

The word 'uncompounded' ('*asaṅkhata*', 'not made by putting together') has originally been coined as a negative description of nirvâṇa in the same way as '*ajâta*' ('not born'), and thus the opposition of uncompounded and compounded realities parallels exactly the opposition of nirvâṇa and *saṁsâra*.[105] In Hînayâna Sûtras, nirvâṇa is the one and only uncompounded reality not conditioned by anything else, and not seen to arise, change, or pass away. The fact that the Sûtras often speak about the *asaṁskṛta dharmas* in the plural must be taken as only a stylistic feature, since no other uncompounded *dharma* than nirvâṇa is ever mentioned in them.[106]

In the last two sections of the *Dhammasaṅgaṇî* of the *Abhidhammapiṭaka*, this uncompounded is described as transcendent (*lokottara*) to the world of *saṁsâra*, of which it is an exit (*u(t)tiṇṇa*). This means that it is not included in the three levels (*vacaras*, *lokas* or *dhâtus*) of the universe: the world of sensory pleasures (*kâmaloka*), of ideal forms (*rûpaloka*) and of no forms (*arûpaloka*). Hence it also transcends the normal sensory categories relevant in the *kâmaloka* as well as of the states of meditation (*jhânas*) corresponding to the last two *lokas*. It is, by the same token, independent of the effects of *karma* governing one's destiny in the rounds of rebirths on the three levels of the universe.[107]

The idea of turning away from the threefold world of *saṁsâra* is evident in the use of the words '*nissaraṇa*'[108] and '*uttiṇṇa*' which I have translated as 'exit'. '*Nissaraṇa*' (Pâli & BSkr., Skr. *niḥsaraṇa*) signifies 'going out', 'departure' and 'giving up' but also 'being freed' and especially an 'escape from *saṁsâra*'[109]. '*Uttiṇṇa*' is a past participle of the verb '*uttarati*', 'to come out', 'to go over', 'to go beyond' and refers to an 'outlet', 'passage' or an 'exit'[110].

A detailed description of the Uncompounded is found in the *Asaṁkhatasamyutta* of the *Saṁyuttanikâya* as well as in its abridged Chinese parallel[111]. In the Pâli text, the Buddha announces that he will teach the monks the Uncompounded and the way to the Uncompounded, and proceeds by explaining that the Uncompounded is the destruction of passion (*râga*), hatred (*dosa*), and confusion (*moha*), and that the way to the

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104 *Udâna*, pp. 80–81.

105 Bareau 1951, 5, 18–19, 218, 250. The Chinese even translated 'nirvâṇa' and '*asaṁskṛta*' with the same word '*wou-wei*', 'not made' (ibid. p. 5).

106 Bareau 1951, 15, 31–34, 248, 250; Lamotte 1958, 675; *Ang*, I 152.

107 *Dhammasaṅgaṇî*, chs. 663, 665, 676, 695–700, 713–718, 730–735, 741–747, 755–765, 779–790, 802–809, 835. See also *Udâna*, pp. 9 and 80 and Bareau 1951, 25–28. On the three *lokas* see Lamotte 1958, 34–35, 681–682.

108 Cf. *Kosa*, t. I p. 12: "*Niḥsâra* signifie 'sortie (*sâra* = *niḥsaraṇa*) nécessaire (*avaśyaṁ*)', le Nirvâṇa (*nirupadhisesanirvâṇa*) de tout conditionné."

109 Rhys Davids & Stede 1972, 374.

110 Rhys Davids & Stede 1972, 131–132 s.v. *uttarati* & *uttiṇṇa*.

Uncompounded is "mindfulness related to the body". Having told this, the Buddha says he has done what should be done by a teacher seeking the best of his disciples.[112]

The way to the Uncompounded is then described in more detail as consisting of various kinds of meditations and spiritual efforts, ending up with the statement that the way to the Uncompounded is the noble eightfold path[113]. After that, the Uncompounded as the goal[114] of the path is described with 31 expressions as follows[115]:

> It is the end (*antañca*), without the outflows (*anâsavañca*), the truth (*saccañca*), that which is beyond (*pârañca*), the subtle one (*nipunañca*), the hard to see (*sududdasañca*), the unfading one (*ajajjaraṁ*), the stable one (*dhuvaṁ*), the undecaying one (*apalokitaṁ*), the invisible one (*anidassanaṁ*), the taintless one (*nippapaṁ*), the peace (*santaṁ*), the deathless (*amataṁ*), the excellent one (*panîtaṁ*), the blissful one (*sivaṁ*), the sanctuary[116] (*khemaṁ*), the destruction of thirst (*taṇhakkhayo*), the wonderful one (*acchariya*), the supranormal one (*abhûtaṁ*), the one free from calamities (*anîtika*), the state of freedom from calamities (*anîtikadhamma*), **nibbâna**, the freedom from suffering (*avyâpajjho*[117]), the dispassion (*virâgo*), the purity (*suddhi*), the release (*mutti*), the non-attachment (*anâlayo*), the refuge (*dîpa*), the ultimate shelter (*leṇa*), the final protection (*tâṇaṁ*), the secure (*saraṇaṁ*).[118]

Thus, liberation from the phenomenal world has been described as a spatial shift from one sphere to another. This seems to reflect the common epistemology of the time, haunted by the notion that to know something is to become part of the known. This idea was important in the *Upaniṣads*[119]; and the whole *Vedântic* doctrine of the identity of *âtman* and *Brahman* is based on it in the sense that when one realizes that *âtman* is *Brahman*, one is believed to become at the very moment absorbed into *Brahman*. Underlying these notions is a theory of meaning based on an isomorphy between language and reality.[120]

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111 See Bareau 1951, 17–18.

112 *Samyutta*, IV 359. *Ang*, II 34 takes freedom from passion (*virâga*) to be the best of all things, compounded *or uncompounded*; i.e. the Uncompounded is freedom from passion.

113 *Samyutta*, IV 360–368. The eightfold path itself belongs to the compounded reality (*Ang*, II 34).

114 See *Samyutta*, IV 373.

115 *Samyutta*, IV 368–372.

116 In the original sense of 'a place where one is safe'; cf. Rhys Davids & Stede 1972, 238–239 s.v. '*khema*' & '*khetta*'.

117 See Rhys Davids & Stede 1972, 86 s.v. '*avyâpajjha*'.

118 See also Bareau 1951, 249–250, 276–277.

119 e.g. *Bṛhadâraṇyaka Upaniṣad* VI:I:1: "Verily, he who knows the oldest and the greatest becomes the oldest and the greatest of his own people."

120 Takasaki 1966, 27–28; Streng 1967, 36, 38; Smart 1973, 115. In Vedic texts, speech (*vâc*, a feminine word) is the first principle and a creative force comparable to *Brahman* itself, and, like the primeval man in the *Puruṣasûkta* of

However, to use Frederick Streng's categorization of religious apprehension into three classes, the Hînayânistic apprehension of the uncompounded nirvâṇa should be said to be "intuitive" in contradistinction to "mythical" and "dialectical"[121]. The Hînayânists do not take any verbal expressions to refer to nirvâṇa in such a way that nirvâṇa would be embodied in the expressions themselves, as is the case in the mythical structure of religious apprehension[122]. On the contrary, in the intuitive structure verbal expressions are only analogies that hint at – or reflect – the Absolute. For this reason, conceptualization is only preparatory to intuitive grasping of the Absolute.[123]

Thus, the *Theravâdin* idea of the eternal Absolute behind the phenomenal world can be taken to be a metaphorical attempt to describe verbally the mystical experience of unification with the external world. However, the metaphoric quality is not stressed and thus it is not, for instance, said that nirvâṇa is *as though* it is the ultimate shelter, or *as though* it is hard to see. This is because such parlance would weaken the full meaning of the descriptions of nirvâṇa. Nirvâṇa is for a Buddhist something real, not something as though real.

Yet the eternal dilemma of all religious speech is that at the same that the reality of the ultimate value must be stressed, its descriptions must remain so vague that they do not trivialize the ultimate value, i.e. make the supraworldly (here: *lokottara*) worldly (here: *lokiya*), nor the sacred profane. Thus, almost all of the descriptions of nirvâṇa point *away* from the phenomenal world, while it is not too clear what they point *to*. Nirvâṇa seems to be a complete negation of the phenomenal world of which we are conscious through language and discursive thinking. But how is it reached?

Further pre-Mahâyâna developments in the relationship between compounded and uncompounded realities

That the distinction between compounded and uncompounded realities is problematic and basically a metaphor describing human experiences, not

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the *Ṛgveda*, it is thought to be fourfold so that only one quarter is known to men, the other three quarters being "hidden and immovable" (Padoux 1963, 15–34).

121 Streng 1967, 105.

122 Streng 1967, 107–108.

123 Streng 1967, 122. Streng, however, does not ascribe the intuitive structure to *Theravâda*, but to Hinduism. Cf. Ruegg 1989, 48: "Now it is, as we have seen, axiomatic with all the schools that the ultimate comprehension of absolute reality must be direct and immediate, and that it is attained finally through non-conceptual gnosis (*jñâna* = *ye šes*) ..."

ontic matters[124], is further confirmed by the fact that some schools came to regard things like space (*âkâśa*) and the *dhyânas* of the world of no forms uncompounded as well. According to Bareau, this may be due to the fact that all these ideas contain the notion of emptiness.[125]

Thus, the *Sarvâstivâdins* accepted in their *Abhidharma* three uncompounded: 1) Nirvâṇa due to the understanding of the four truths and consisting of a detachment from impure *dharmas* (*pratisaṁkhyânirodha*), 2) Nirvâṇa not due to this understanding and not consisting of this detachment but of a prevention of arising of any *dharmas* in the future (*apratisaṁkhyânirodha*), and 3) space (*âkâśa*).[126]

The *Mahâsaṁghikas* and related sects believed in nine different uncompounded, but the three Chinese and one Tibetan versions of *Vasumitra*'s *Samayabhedoparacanacakra* agree only on the first seven which are: the two nirvâṇas, space, and the four states of meditation in the world with no forms. The eighth thesis concerns (with slight variations in different versions) the uncompoundedness of the net of mutual dependencies (*pratîtyasamutpâda*), and the ninth takes the eightfold path to be uncompounded.[127]

The idea of several uncompounded *dharmas* might also be interpreted as an attempt to deal with the problem of the relationship between the uncompounded and compounded realities. Namely, if these two were complete negations of each other, it would be impossible for anything compounded to change to uncompounded, to move from one sphere to the other because there can be no intersection between something-like-that and nothing-like-that, i.e. there is nothing that could connect the two states of being. These two states of being could only *follow* each other, but it would be impossible to say that one had *changed* to the other.[128]

To add new items to the class of uncompounded phenomena would, of course, not solve the problem from the logical point of view. On the experiental level, however, it may serve as a means to narrow the gap between the world and the Absolute, and help one to correlate mystical experiences to everyday life.

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124 See also Wood 1991, 3–6.

125 Bareau 1951, 277–278, 281, 299.

126 See Bareau 1951, 47; Lamotte 1958, 675.

127 See Bareau 1951, 113; Lamotte 1958, 675.

128 See above n. 208 on p. 45. See also pp. 115 for *Nâgârjuna*'s view on this point, and *Kosa*, t. I p. 287 where it is emphasized that the *asaṁskṛtas* have neither causes nor effects.

3.1.5. Nirvâṇa and Mysticism

Meditation as a deconstruction of the sensory process

According to Louis de la Vallée Poussin, the Buddhist sources describe two ways to nirvâṇa that he named "*rationalisme*" and "*mystique*"[129]. To him, these were opposite views, the first one being based on discernment of *dharma*s and seeing "as it really is" (*yathâbhûtaṁ*), the other one on meditative concentration (*samâdhi*) and gradual suppression of all ideas.[130] Thus, the rationalists aimed at an *intellectual understanding* of how phenomenal reality is subjectively constructed and how this construction could be deconstructed, and the mystics strove towards *experiencing* this reversal and cessation *in meditation*.

Whereas the rationalistic theory described nirvâṇa as intellectual understanding, the mystical way led a person to the "cessation of mental representations and feeling" (*saññâvedayitanirodha*), a yogic state of meditation that had been given a Buddhist characterization as "touching the immortal with one's body", i.e. experiencing nirvâṇa in this life (*diṭṭhâdhammanibbâna*). It was not conceived of as an existing thing, but as pure negation, as non-occurrence of the thinking mind and mental factors (*cittacetasikânaṁ dhammânaṁ appavatti*) as the *Visuddhimagga* has it. According to la Vallée Poussin, nirvâṇa always presupposed both sides of the matter, both *samâdhi* and wisdom (*prajñâ*).[131] In some passages the cessation is, as a matter of fact, identified with nirvâṇa[132]:

> "And moreover, my friend: A monk, passing altogether beyond the realm of neither mental representations nor no mental representations (*nevasaññânâsaññâyatana*), enters the cessation of mental representations and feeling (*saññâvedayitanirodha*) and abides in it, seeing through wisdom (*paññâ*) that the *âsava*s[133] are utterly destroyed. So far indeed,

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[129] la Vallée Poussin 1937, 189.

[130] la Vallée Poussin 1937, 189–191. See also Schmithausen 1981, 214. Cf. Vetter 1988, 71.

[131] la Vallée Poussin 1937, 191–192, 211–212, 215–216; Schmithausen 1981, 214–218. Cf. Griffiths 1986, 16: "Buddhist intellectuals have frequently attempted to assimilate the soteriological goal of the attainment of cessation ... to that of Nirvâṇa conceived as a dispassionate intellectual comprehension of the way things are ..." Cf. *Kosa* IV 276: "Celui qui est entré dans la *nirodhasamâpatti* ..., c'est-à-dire le *nirodhasamâpanna*, est nommé 'doublement délivré' parce que par la force de la *prajñâ* et du recueillement (*samâdhi*), il est délivré du *kleśâvarana* et du *vimokṣâvaraṇa* ..."

[132] See King 1980, 101–104; Schmithausen 1981, 216–217; Griffiths 1986, 16–19, 28.

[133] The destruction of the three or four *âsava*s (sensuality, becoming [*bhava*], ignorance, views [*diṭṭhi*]) is a traditional sign of nirvâṇa (see Johansson 1985, 177).

my friend, and without further qualifications, did the Beatific One declare nirvâṇa in this life."[134]

"Here we, o lord, for as long as we like, by passing quite beyond the realm of neither mental representations nor no mental representations, entering on the cessation of mental representations and feeling, abide in it; and having seen through wisdom, our *âsavas* to be utterly destroyed. By passing quite beyond that abiding, o lord, by allaying that abiding, another superhuman state, an excellent Ariyan knowledge and vision (*ñâṇadassana*), an abiding in comfort, is reached. But we, o lord, do not behold another abiding in comfort that is higher or more excellent than this abiding in comfort."

"It is good, Anuruddhas, it is good. There is no other abiding in comfort that is higher or more excellent than this abiding in comfort."[135]

The cessation is at the peak of progressive states of meditation (*dhyânas*), through which one gradually deconstructs the sensory process so that with each step in progressively deepening meditation, one characteristic of 'worldly' being-in-the-world is dropped off.

"Now, my friend, I have seen that the ceasing of the mental formations is gradual. When one has attained the first *dhyâna*, speech has ceased. When one has attained the second *dhyâna*, initial and sustained thought (*vitakkavicâra*) has ceased. When one has attained the third *dhyâna*, zest has ceased. When one has attained the fourth *dhyâna*, inbreathing and outbreathing have ceased.

When one has attained the realm of infinity of space (*âkâsânañcâyatana*), mental representation of objects have ceased. Whe one has attained the realm of infinity of cognition (*viññâṇancâyatana*), mental representation of the realm of infinity of space has ceased. When one has attained the realm of nothingness (*âkiñcaññâyatana*), mental representation of the realm of infinity of cognition has ceased. When one has attained the realm of neither mental representations nor no mental representations (*nevasaññâñâsaññâyatana*), mental representation of the realm of nothingness has ceased. Both mental representations and feeling have ceased when one has attained the cessation of mental representations and feeling (*saññâvedayitanirodha* or *nirodhasamâpatti*)."[136]

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134 *Ang*, IV 454. *Kosa*, t. V p. 185: "Parce que le Nirvâṇa ou *nirodha*, étant libre de dix *nimittas*, est nommé *animitta*. Le recueillement (*samâdhi*) qui a le Nirvâṇa pour objet est donc l'*animitta*."

135 *Majj*, I 209.

136 *Samyutta*, IV 217. The word '*nirodhasamâpatti*' is postcanonical and does not appear in the *Tipiṭaka* (Schmithausen 1981, 249). See also See Johansson 1969, 101; *Kosa*, t. V p. 143, 207–209. According to Vetter (1988, 63–67), the formless meditations in the various infinite realms are of non-Buddhist origins and have been added to the four *dhyânas* when the Buddhists no longer had access to the original *dhyâna* meditation practised by the Buddha. The *saṁjñâvedayitanirodha*, that at one time meant the same as the state of neither mental representations nor no mental representations, would have been added still later upon the four formless meditations, although it had been known earlier, too.

In the *Bahuvedaniyasutta*, the Buddha denies that in sensual pleasures lies "the highest happiness and joy that creatures experience", because there is "another happiness more excellent and exquisite than that happiness"[137]. This is then described as a happiness related to meditation:

> "Here, Ânanda, a monk, aloof from sensual pleasures, aloof from unskilled states of mind, enters and abides in the first *dhyâna*, accompanied by initial and sustained thought, is born of aloofness and is zestful and joyful. This, Ânanda, is the other happiness that is more excellent and exquisite than that happiness.
>
> ... Here, Ânanda, a monk by allaying initial and discursive thought, his mind inwardly tranquillized and fixed on one point, enters and abides in the second *dhyâna* which is devoid of initial and sustained thought, is born of concentration, and is zestful and joyful. This, Ânanda, ...
>
> ... Here, Ânanda, a monk by the fading away of zest, abides with equanimity, attentive and clearly conscious, and he experiences in his body that happiness of which the Ariyans say: "Joyful lives he who has equanimity and is mindful." And entering on the third *dhyâna* he abides in it. This ...
>
> ... Here, Ânanda, a monk, by getting rid of happiness and suffering, by the going down of his former pleasures and sorrows, enters and abides in the fourth *dhyâna* which has neither suffering nor happiness, and which is entirely purified by equanimity and mindfulness. This ...
>
> ... Here, Ânanda, a monk, by wholly transcending mental representations of material form (*rûpasaññâ*), by the going down of mental representations of sensory reaction (*patighasaññâ*) by not holding mental representations of diversity (*nânattasaññâ*), thinking: "Space is unending", enters and abides in the realm of infinity of space. This ...
>
> ... Here, Ânanda, a monk, by wholly transcending the realm of infinity of space and thinking: "Cognition is unending", enter and abides in the realm of infinity of cognition. This ...
>
> ... Here, Ânanda, a monk, by wholly transcending the realm of infinity of cognition, and thinking: "There is nothing", enters and abides in the realm of nothingness. This ...
>
> ... Here, Ânanda, a monk, by wholly transcending the realm of nothingness, enters and abides in the realm of neither mental representations nor no mental representations. This ...
>
> ... Here, Ânanda, a monk, by wholly transcending the realm of neither mental representations nor no mental representations, enters and abides in the cessation of mental representations and feeling. This ..."[138]

The mystical experience of cessation

According to *Majjhimanikâya* I 296, in the cessation of mental representations and feeling there is no cognition (*viññâṇa*), physical function, speech or mental function (*cittasaṅkhârâ*), and the sense organs are "puri-

[137] *Majj*, I 398.
[138] *Majj*, I 398–400.

fied". If to this were added the disappearance of vitality (*âyu*) and heat (*usmâ*) and the destruction of sense organs, the agent could be considered dead.[139]

Thus, the cessation is like cataleptic trance, hibernation of some mammals, or coma. The subject's heart rate has dropped almost to zero, respiration has ceased or is at a very low level, and body temperature is low as well. Mentally, the ordinary functions of sense-perception, concept-formation and ratiocination have ceased.[140]

Consequently, it seems that the cessation would not be a conscious state and thus not a pure consciousness event (PCE). According to the "orthodox" view, it is a "mindless" (*acittaka*), state. However, some Buddhist authors have held that it only involves the cessation of mental *activity*, because otherwise it would be difficult to explain how one could re-emerge from the cessation, i.e. how the ceased cognition (*vijñâna*) could reappear.[141]

In Mahâyâna[142], this dilemma was met with the concept of '*âlaya-vijñâna*', about whose literal meaning there is no unanimous tradition[143]. Its first occurrence in the meaning of a specific *vijñâna* seems to be in the *Yogâcârabhûmi* where, however, no explicit explanation concerning the meaning of the term is found[144]. The word appears in a passage where it is said that when a person is in cessation (*nirodhasamâpatti*), his consciousness (*vijñâna*) does not leave the body because "*âlayavijñâna* has not ceased (to be present) in the material sense-faculties".[145]

It is, however, difficult to decide whether the *âlayavijñâna* is a purely theoretical concept or whether it refers to a distinct experience. In the latter case it is still unclear whether it refers to a PCE or to an unconscious state. Usually it is not considered objectless (*nirâlambana*) or contentless (*nirâkâra*), although its objects and content are indistinct

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139 *Majj*, I 296. See also *Dîgha*, II 156; King 1980, 107; Griffiths 1986, 6; 1990, 79–80.

140 Griffiths 1990, 80. Also Griffiths 1986, 9–11; Conze 1972, 101.

141 Griffiths 1990, 78–79, 82–83.

142 However, Schmithausen (1987, 33) remarks that in the passages of the *Yogâcârabhûmi* where *âlayavijñâna* is spoken of, there are no specifically Mahâyânist elements.

143 Perhaps the commonest rendering is 'store-consciousness' (French: 'connaissance réceptacle'). '*Âlaya*' usually refers to clinging or to that to which one clings. Schmithausen (1987, 22) has put forward the following definition: "the (... perhaps better: *a*) (form of) mind (that is characterized by)s t i c k i n g (in the material sense-faculties)."

144 That is first given in SMD V:3, where *âlayavijñâna* is called such because it "joins and unites itself with this body". Besides this, it is also called 'appropriating consciousness' (*âdânavijñâna*) because it is by this consciousness that the body is appropriated. (See Schmithausen 1987, 11–12, 15.)

145 Schmithausen 1987, 15, 18. In the *Kosa* (t. I pp. 20–21), "non-information" (*avijñapti*) serves a similar function.

(*aparichinna*), extremely subtle (*atisûkṣma*) and not experienced (*asaṁvidita*). This extraordinary quality of the objects and content makes it possible that *âlayavijñâna* counts as a PCE – although this is by no means clear.[146]

On the other hand, if the cessation is an integral element of nirvâṇa as la Vallée Poussin asserted, and especially as it is sometimes even identified with nirvâṇa, it is difficult to see how it could be an unconscious state[147]. A PCE, or at least a nondualistic experience or an unmediated experience would provide a much more plausible explanation[148].

In the *Aṭṭhakavagga* of the *Suttanipâta* we have descriptions of cessation of mental representations (*saññâ*) that, according to Gómez and Vetter, cannot be identified with the cessation of mental representations and feeling (*saññâvedayitanirodha*). This experience seems clearly to be a conscious experience since in its descriptions not only all dogmas and mental representations are denied, but this denial is also denied in order to "avoid the impression that the mental state one aims for is similar to the state of a stone or plant".[149] The relevant passages run as follows:

> There are no ties for one who is devoid of mental representations (*saññâ*). There are no illusions for one who is released through wisdom (*paññâvimutti*). But those who have grasped mental representation and view wander in the world (*loka*), causing offence.[150]
>
> He has no (ordinary) mental representation of mental representations, he has no deranged mental representation of mental representations, he is *not without mental representation*, he has no mental representation of what has disappeared. For one who has attained to such a state form disappears, for that which is named 'diversification' has its origin in mental representation.[151]

This describes an experience that on one hand is free from mental activity (mental representations, "views" or theories), but on the other is somehow connected to wisdom. Whether wisdom leads to this experience, is its result, or occurs during the experience, is not made clear in our sources[152].

In the latter quotation, however, it is stressed that even though a person has no ordinary or deranged mental representation (of mental repre-

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146 Griffiths 1990, 83–85. Cf. below pp. 118–119 (unconstructive wisdom and its object and content!).

147 Also Griffiths (1990, 85) takes up the question of the soteriological value of an unconscious state.

148 Cf. Griffiths 1990, 91.

149 Vetter 1988, 103, 105.

150 *Suttanipâta* 4:847 (*Mâgandiaysutta*). Transl. by K.R. Norman, with 'mental representations' substituted for 'perceptions' as a translation for '*saññâ*'.

151 *Suttanipâta* 4:874 (*Mâgandiyasutta* [my italics]). Transl. by K.R. Norman, with 'mental representations' substituted for 'perceptions'.

152 See Schmithausen 1981, 218.

sentations), he is yet not without mental representations. What mental representations the subject has then, seem to have been ineffable to the author(s). It is only said that he or she does not perceive diverse forms because they have disappeared with the disappearance of perception.

This sounds very much like the PCE thesis: the subject's consciousness is empty (no mental representations) although he or she is not unconscious (not without mental representations); the early Buddhists have only had difficulty in expressing this in words. On the other hand, if consciousness is not empty in this experience, it may still be unmediated in the sense that its content does not reflect the subject's previous conceptual scheme (as mental representations are ineffable), and at least the experience obviously is a nondualistic experience (no "diversification").

Thus, in early Buddhism there has been a supreme goal whose essential element was a mystical experience, the precise nature of which must remain somewhat unclear. Nevertheless, it is closely related to *saññâvedayitanirodha* and to what came to be known as nirvâṇa.

As nirvâṇa is thought to be a permanent state[153], it is reasonable to take it in its "rationalistic" aspect as an "enlightened" view of the world, i.e. a view altered by an ineffable mystical experience where the limits of language and discursive thinking are transcended. The verbal descriptions of this view form an interpretation of the experience, ascribing a meaning to it. In this way, there is feedback between the mystical and intellectual aspects of nirvâṇa, and the mystical experience can contribute to a change in a person's intellectual way of understanding his or her being-in-the-world.

3.1.6. The Buddha's Liberating Experience

Despite the central position of the Buddha's liberating experience in Buddhism, the earliest of his followers have not been willing or able to interpret it in detail. The texts do not give any detailed description of what the Buddha's revolutionizing experience was like. The word 'nirvâṇa' appears in the earliest fragments of the sacred biography only in the *Ariyapariyesanâsutta*, and, as Vetter says, it is "more a figure of speech" than a (technical) concept[154]. '*Bodhi*', for its part, appears only in the *Mahâsaccakasutta* when the Buddha ponders whether there could be "another way to enlightenment (*bodhi*)". Later, in the *Vinayapiṭaka*, we read that Gautama had recently become a fully enlightened one (*paṭhamabhisambuddho*)[155].

153 Only the *Sammatîyas* and *Vatsîputrîyas* thought it possible for a monk to loose his nirvâṇa (Bareau 1987, 449).

154 Vetter 1988, 15.

155 *Vin*, I 1.

In the *Ariyapariyesanâsutta*, we are simply told that after years of vain attempts, while meditating in the surroundings of Uruvelâ, the Buddha immediately attained "the excellent freedom from bondage, nibbâna", that was not subject to birth, aging, illness, sorrow and suffering. At that very moment he knew: "My liberation (*vimutti*) is steadfast. This is the last birth and there will be no more (re)births."[156]

According to the *Suttas Mahâsaccaka, Bhayabherava* and *Dvedhâvitakka*, the liberation was preceded by four states of meditation (*jhâna*) and three mental abilities (*ñâṇa*). The Buddha describes his experience after the third ability: "When I was liberated to freedom I knew: birth is destroyed, *Brahma*-life lived and the task accomplished. There will be no new life."[157]. Thus, the *Ariyapariyesanâsutta* is completely silent about how the Buddha reached his nirvâṇa, and the *Mahâsaccakasutta* contains a description of the liberation following the four *dhyânas* which the Buddha had already practised for years in vain[158].

Vetter explains this by taking his clue from Majjhima I 246, where the Buddha thinks he has found the way to enlightenment when he suddenly remembers a childhood experience. This experience is in the *sutta* interpreted as the first *dhyâna* consisting of contemplation and reflection combined with joy and happiness. But according to Vetter, this was not the same experience as the one that later came to be regarded as first of the four *dhyânas*[159], but a desireless momentary experience of happiness that disappears as soon as one tries to perpetuate it by trying to possess the object observed. It was precisely this type of experience that the Buddha meant by his 'middle way'[160]. However, whether this is really so, is hard to establish with any certainty. According to the *Mahâsaccakasutta*, the contents of the enlightenment consist of three mental abilities (*ñâṇa*) which, nevertheless, are nothing more than traditional paranormal faculties (*abhiñña*) numbering six in Indian sources[161]. The sixth of these, the knowledge of the outflows (*âsava*) of sensuality (*kâmâsava*), becoming (*bhavâsava*) and ignorance (*avijjâsava*) and their destruction, however, is

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156 *Majj*, I 167.

157 *Majj*, I 17–23, 114–117, 247–249. The *Padhânasutta* (*Suttanipâta*, III:2) describes the Buddha's experience poetically as only a defeat over *Mâra* the evil one. *Mâra* is a purely Buddhist mythological being who is the lord of death, sense pleasures and suffering; and the ability to recognize and expell him is considered a part of enlightenment (see Ling 1962, 44–65). Besides this *Theravâdin sutta*, the Buddha's enlightenment is described as a win over *Mâra* in the MHV (II 224–227, 354–372), the BHC (XIII:1–72), the *Vinaya* of the *Mûlasarvâstivâdins* (Rockhill 1884, 30–32), and the *Nidânakathâ* of the *Theravâdins* (*Jâtaka* I 71–76). In the LV (p. 314) *Mâra* assaults the Buddha immediately after his enlightenment.

158 *Majj*, I 163–166, 247–249, II 212.

159 On these, see Vetter 1988, xxvi n.9, 5.

160 Vetter 1988, xxix, 3–4, 10, 63.

161 See Jayatilleke 1963, 437–438; *Ang*, I 254–256.

known only in Buddhist sources and thus may be considered the real essence of the enlightenment *as described here*[162]. This *âsava*-division seems to have been modelled after the formula of the four noble truths[163].

Although the Buddha's experience is the corner-stone of Buddhism, it is not thought in *Theravâda* that anyone except the 25 buddhas could attain this experience. Yet it is not very clear what exactly is the difference between the enlightenment of the Buddha and that of the enlightened disciples (*Arhat*s), apart from the fact that the Buddha is believed to have gained his enlightenment all by himself, whereas the *Arhat*s are only learners (*śrâvaka*) conducted to the liberation by the Buddha.[164]

Thus, we cannot reconstruct the nature of the Buddha's liberating experience with any historical certainty. It seems, however, that the compilers of the sacred biography have emphasized its rationalistic aspect more and focused their attention on the knowledge gained by the Buddha. Yet the experience is also related to have been preceded by the four *dhyâna*s. Before his death, the Buddha is described to have gone through the formless *dhyâna*s as well[165], and in an other context he is said to have declared the cessation of mental representations and feeling as "nirvâṇa in this life". Consequently, the mystical aspect must have also been present in some form.

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[162] Démieville 1927, 283, 290–291; Bareau 1963, 79–80, 84 (emphasized addition by I.P.).

[163] Schmithausen 1981, 205.

[164] As to the stories about the Buddha's disciples arriving at enlightenment very easily by only listening to the Buddha's instruction, they may be seen as nostalgic descriptions of what the human existence was like in the great beginning when the founder walked amongst us (Cf. Bond 1984, 228. See Pyysiäinen 1988, 75–76). Even today many *Theravâda* Buddhists consider nirvâṇa possible only when the Buddha was in the world or when he will come again (Bunnag 1973, 19–20; Bond 1988. 56–58, 113. See also Gothóni 1982, 189).

[165] *Dîgha*, II 156.

3.5. Mahâyâna Buddhism

3.5.1. The compounded *dharmas* are unreal

In criticizing the Hînayâna ideas of plurality of *dharmas* and the dualism between the compounded (*saṁskṛta*) phenomenal reality and the uncompounded (*asaṁskṛta*) nirvâṇa, the Sûtras of Perfection of Wisdom (*Prajñâpâramitâsûtras*) tackle the issue from the point of view of language and reality. The idea is to show that if being-in-the-world is understood rigidly through language and discursive thinking, an illusion about an objective reality corresponding to language is guaranteed to arise. This starting point has been very well expressed by Lindtner:

> "All conscious beings find themselves living in an extended world of plurality (*prapañca*). Only the Buddha is beyond *prapañca*. ... For this reason *prapañca* also means *our* expansion of the world, or, as one might say, the world presented to us in and by language. The very *modus operandi* of *prapañca* is *vikalpa*, usually to be translated as 'discursive or conceptual thinking' but occasionally also 'objectively' as 'distinctions, differences' and the like. *Vikalpas* differentiate the world of *prapañca* into something which is said to exist (*astîti*) and something which is said not to exist (*nâstîti*) and hypostatise these respectively as being (*bhâva*) and non-being (*abhâva*)."[1]

Thus, when the *Prajñâpâramitâsûtra* in 25 000 lines denies the existence of 'self'[2], it should be understood so that 'self' is just a word with no corresponding object in reality:

> (O)ne speaks of a 'self', and yet no self is got at.
>
> 'Perfect wisdom' and 'Bodhisattva', mere words are these. And the reality which corresponds to the word 'Bodhisattva' cannot be apprehended, either inwardly [or subjectively, *âdhyâtmikaṁ*], or outwardly [or objectively, *bâhyaṁ*], or between the two. Just as one speaks of a 'being' although no being can be apprehended in actual reality; and that word 'being' is a mere concept, a conceptual dharma and has the status of a concept.[3]

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[1] Lindtner 1982, 270–271. Lindtner's (p. 271) translation of '*prapañca*' as either 'world' or 'language' is clearly compatible with Gadamer's view that "(w)hoever has language 'has' the world" (above p. 37 and its n.145). Loy (1988, 54) explains *prapañca* as "the differentiation of nondual world of nirvikalpa experience into the discrete-objects-of-the-phenomenal world, which occurs due to savikalpa thought-construction."

[2] The self "is not really there (*anabhinirvṛtta*)", and it does "not exist absolutely" (Conze 1984, 189, 191 [P]).

[3] Conze 1984, 90 (P). Additions in brackets by I.P. According to the MASAMG (VIII:18b), all dharmas are originally without concepts (*nirvikalpa*).

> There is the teaching of 'individual self' (*âtma*), and the teaching of 'non-individual self' (*anâtma*); But neither 'individual self' nor 'non-individual self' whatever has been taught by the Buddhas.[4]

This is the central teaching of the Sûtras of Perfection of Wisdom, that the meaningfulness of language is not dependent on finding objective reference to words. Language is not a picture of reality. It does not reveal reality but veils it.[5] The quoted Sûtra precisely says that the artificial "conceptual phenomena" (*dharma-prajñapti*[6]) of "conventional terms" and "adventitious designations" are a sort of disguise[7] in which the reality is veiled so that it "cannot be apprehended inwardly, outwardly, or between the two".[8] Thus, all references or extensions of verbal expressions are judged as illusory and deprived of an essence (*svabhâva*)[9].

According to *Nâgârjuna*, this non-existence of essences (*svabhâva*) is due to the fact that everything can be explained as caused by something else, in accordance with the theory of the net of mutual dependencies (*pratîtyasamutpâda*). But then, of course, this something else must also be without an essence.[10] Thus, the view that everything has a cause outside itself is equivalent to the view that there is no causation[11], and *Nâgârjuna* takes the idea of causation to be "empty" as well[12].

While the Hînayânists had maintained that "(f)or the occurrence of any given event y, there exists a necessary and sufficient condition x"[13], *Nâgârjuna* remarks that an existing thing does not need a cause as it exists already, and a non-existing thing naturally cannot have a cause either[14]. For causation to be possible, causes and effects would have to exist simultaneously in a peculiar transitional phase between existence and non-existence which, of course, always escapes us.[15] Consequently, *Nâgârjuna* rea-

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4 MMK, 18:6.

5 Cf. Quine 1969, 48–68; Streng 1967, 140–144.

6 See Conze 1967, 210.

7 P (Conze 1984, 57 [P]) uses the word '*pratidharma*', 'counter-phenomenon', 'phenomenon in disguise'.

8 Conze 1984, 57, 90–91 (P).

9 "Illusions and mere words do not stand at any point or spot; they are not, do not come into being, are false to behold. For of what the own-being is seen to be an illusion, of that there is no production or stopping, no defilement or purification." (Conze 1984, 57 [P].) See n. 38 on p. 10.

10 MMK, 22:9: "So when there is dependence, self-existence (*svabhâva*) does not exist; And if there is no self-existence whatever, how is an other-existence (*parabhâva*) possible?" See Streng 1967, 44.

11 Loy 1986, 15.

12 MMK, 22:10: "Thus 'dependence' and 'that which is dependent' are completely empty (*śûnya*)." See Streng 1967, 147.

13 As formulated by Griffiths (1986, 31) on the basis of *Majj*, I 262–264 and *Samyutta*, II 28–32.

14 MMK, 1:6: "Of what non-real thing is there a conditioning cause? And if it is [already] real, what use is a cause?"

15 See MMK, 1:1–14 (=appendix 1). Cf. p. 48 n.210.

sons that the truth is constituted by things unoriginated and not terminated[16].

Thus the Hînayânistic dualism of an individual as a constructor and the world as a construction is attacked from two sides, both the self and the elements of existence (*skandhas*) being judged as unreal, or, better, this *distinction* being denied[17]. The *Sûtra* in 25 000 lines says that what "holds good of the skandhas, that is also true of the 18 elements" which are non-existent conceptual phenomena, too[18].

The central conceptual tool in the ontological relativism of the *Prajñâpâramitâ* and in the related criticism of a dualistic understanding of being-in-the-world is the notion of emptiness (*śûnyatâ*). This word is derived from the Sanskrit root *śva-*, 'to swell'. Thus *śûnya* ('empty') literally means 'relating to the swollen'. The idea is that something which looks swollen outside is hollow inside.[19]

However, 'emptiness' is not a word describing reality accurately while all other words fail to do so. It is a pure negation that only "prepares the ground for the true insight to be gained through concentration"[20]. It is a refutation of all theories; and those who maintain 'emptiness' as a theory are "incurable" (*asâdhya*), as *Nâgârjuna* says[21].

Consequently, the previously mentioned 18 elements are said to be empty (*śûnya*)[22], and likewise *dharmas* are regarded as being without essence and thus non-existent and mere emptiness, without any material form:

> (N)o dharma connects with any other dharma, nor does it disconnect; it is not joined nor disjoined – on account of the emptiness of their essential original nature.[23]
>
> For such is the true nature of dharmas that in fact they are illusory[24].

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[16] MMK, 18:7: "Those things which are unoriginated and not terminated, like *nirvâṇa*, constitute the Truth (*dharmatâ*)."

[17] "The absolute purity results from the unreality of both self and the skandhas (Conze 1984, 297 [P])." See also Loy 1988, 11. MMK, 18:4: "When 'I' and 'mine' have stopped, then also there is not an outside nor an inner self."

[18] Conze 1984, 90 (P).

[19] See Conze 1975, 130–131; Chang 1971, 60; Loy 1988, 50.

[20] de Jong 1972b, 14. However, *Vasubandhu* seems to have distinguished two meanings of *śûnyatâ*: the absence of *pudgala* ('personality') and *dharmas*, and the real existence of this absence (Ruegg 1969, 342). This latter idea is reminiscent of Sartre's way of regarding *le néant* as having an existence (see below p. 127).

[21] MMK, 13:8. See also Loy 1988, 20.

[22] Conze 1984, 144–148 (P + Ad + Da).

[23] Conze 1984, 61 (P).

[24] Conze 1984, 138 (P). The *Laṅkâvatârasûtra* (p. 18) explains this illusion as follows: "(F)rom one's clinging (to appearances) that the manifestations of his own Mind are regarded as reality (dharmatâ)." LNKV, p. 65: "Because of one's attachment to false imagination, Mahâmati, we have to talk of emptiness, no-birth, non-duality, and absence of self-nature."

According to *Nâgârjuna*:

> Since there is no *dharma* whatever originating independently, no *dharma* whatever exists which is not empty[25].
>
> (A)ll dharmas are marked with emptiness; they are not produced or stopped ...[26]

The *dharmas* are

> like a dream, a mock show, a mirage, an echo, a reflected image, a city of *Gandharvas*, an illusory magical creation.[27]

The Lotus Sûtra, for its part, declares that one who has reached nirvâṇa

> looks upon this triple world in every direction as void, resembling the produce of magic, similar to a dream, a mirage, an echo.[28]

3.5.2. Only the uncompounded Absolute is real

As the phenomenal world of compounded *dharmas* is unreal, all that remains real is the absolute uncompounded reality[29]. In scholarly *Mâdhyamika* treatises, like the MMK, this is expressed through the idea of two truth-levels, that of worldly surface-convention (*lokasaṁvṛti*) and that which is true ultimately (*satyaṁ paramârthataḥ*). Only the latter is the truth that corresponds to reality (*tattva*). The conventional truth (*saṁvṛti satya*), for its part, is not really truth but ignorance (*avidyâ*).[30]

However, expressions with conventional truth may act as "skillful means" (*upâya*) and point to *paramârtha*[31]. The Laṇkâvatârasûtra illustrates this by saying that a finger-tip pointing to the moon is not that which is

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25 MMK, 24:19.

26 *Hṛdayâ*, p. 85.

27 Conze 1984, 305 (P). According to *Nâgârjuna* (MMK 7:34): "As a magic trick, a dream or a fairy castle. Just so should we consider origination, duration, and cessation." LNKV (p. 20) declares that the world "is like an image magically created."

28 Lotus, p. 136.

29 According to the SMD (i,2; ii,2), the word 'compounded' (*saṁskṛta*) does not correspond to anything absolute, and thus nothing compounded exists in the last analysis. However, only the noble ones (*ârya*) know the Absolute (*paramârtha*) by intuition (*pratyâtmavedaṇîa*). According to the Lotus (pp. 128–129), nirvâṇa is one and the same for all, as it is "a consequence of understanding that all (*dharmas*) are equal."

30 Murti 1980, 243–245; Ruegg 1981, 34, 42. The distinction is also known in the *Prajñâpâramitâ* (e.g. Conze 1984, 529 [Ad in Gilgit ms.]; see Murti 1980, 244) and the Lotus Sûtra (pp. 112–113).

31 Ruegg 1981, 42 calls this a "transactional" (*vyavahâra*) usage. Gómez 1987b, 447 speaks about "a doctrinal bridge that will reach out beyond the sphere of mystical silence." On "skillful means", see below pp. 114–115.

pointed at, although the ignorant grasp only the fingertip and not the moon[32].

Says *Nâgârjuna*:

> The teaching by the Buddhas of the *dharma* has recourse to two truths:
> The world-ensconced truth and the truth which is the highest sense.
>
> Those who do not know the distinction between these two truths are incapable of grasping the ultimate meaning (*tattva*) of the teaching of the Buddha.[33]

The Absolute is called by various names and epithets, such as 'the Realm of Dharma (*dharmatâ*)'[34], 'Dharma-element (*dharmadhâtu*)', 'Suchness (*tathatâ*)' and 'reality limit (*bhûtakoṭi*)'[35]. This Dharma-element as the real essence of all *dharmas* is then said to stay fixed, whether buddhas appear in the world or not[36]; and enlightenment means penetration into this absolute reality[37].

In the *Ratnagotravibhâga*, the ultimate truth is identified with the reality of all living beings (*sattvadhâtu*) which, again, is identified with the embryo of the *Tathâgata* (*tathâgatagarbha*). This, then, is said to be the same as the Dharma-body (*dharmakâya*).[38]

The word '*garbha*' has, besides 'embryo' and 'essence', the meanings 'hollow', 'cavity', 'interior' and 'swelling of the pregnant womb'[39]. '*Tathâgatagarbha*' has been given three interpretations in the *Ratnagotra*[40],

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32 LNKV, pp. 169, 193.

33 MMK, 24:8–9. The first two *ślokas* are in Streng's translation, and the last two are a combination of Streng's and Murti's (1980, 243–244) translations with 'ultimate meaning' substituted for Streng's 'profound "point"' and Murti's 'deep significance'.

34 It is said that a *bodhisattva* "does not review anything as separate from the Realm of Dharma, or distinguish any *dharma* from the Realm of Dharma (Conze 1984, 65 [P])."

35 Conze 1984, 528 (Ad in Gilgit ms.): "Moreover, Subhuti, all dharmas have Suchness for own-being, the Reality limit, the Dharma-element." The world "has as its highest (development) the Dharma-element, and the space-element as its terminus (Conze 1984, 133 [P])". Cf. *Kosa*, t.I pp. 30, 58, 71.

36 Conze 1984, 310 (P): "Whether Tathagatas are produced (in the world) or are not produced, fixed is this Dharmahood od dharmas, the Dharma-element, the fixedness of Dharma, the fixed sequence of dharma(s)."

37 "Enlightenment, that is a synonym of emptiness, of Suchness, of Reality limit, of the Dharma-element. Moreover enlightenment is Suchness, nonfalsehood, unaltered Suchness, unaltered existence, therefore is it called 'enlightenment'." (Conze 1984, 531 [Ad in Gilgit ms.].)

38 *Ratnagotra*, p. 143: "O Sâriputra, the ultimate Truth is a synonym of the mass of living beings (*sattva-dhâtu*). The mass of living beings is, o Sâriputra, nothing but a synonym of the Matrix of the Tathâgata (*tathâgatagarbha*). The Matrix of the Tathâgata is, o Sâriputra, nothing but a synonym of the Absolute Body (*dharmakâya*)."

39 And thus bears a certain parallellism to the word '*śûnya(tâ)*'. See Ruegg 1969, 501.

40 See Takasaki 1966, 22.

taking the compound to be grammatically either a *tatpuruṣa*, a *karmadhâraya* or a *bahuvrîhi*, respectively.

Thus, no one among the living beings (*sattvadhâtu*) stands outside the *Tathâgata*'s Dharma-body because 1) all living beings are the interior of the *Tathâgata*, i.e. are within the *Tathâgata*[41]. 2) Secondly, it is explained that as reality is an undifferentiated whole, the *Tathâgata* is identical with the inner essence (*garbha*) of living beings, and *Tathâgatagarbha* thus is a the name for the hidden Suchness (*tathatâ*) of living beings[42]. 3) Thirdly, it is said that the inner essence of living beings is the essence or embryo of the *Tathâgata* meaning that the cause of Tathâgatahood lies in every being[43].

It is argued that as ordinary people, *Arhat*s and buddhas altogether form the reality as an indivisible whole, the embryo of The Victorious One exists in all living beings[44]. The Dharma-body, to which the reality of *Tathâgatagarbha* was also identified, is said to be the supreme or highest Unity and synonymous with the sphere of nirvâṇa (*nirvâṇadhâtu*), enlightenment (*anuttarâ saṁyaksaṁbodhi*) and Dharma-element (*dharmadhâtu*)[45].

This *Tathâgatagarbha* is told to exist in all living beings, including "absolutely defiled" ordinary people and animals, in three meanings:[46]

> 1) The Absolute Body (*dharmakâya*) of the Tathâgata penetrates all living beings; 2) the Tathâgata being the Reality (*tathâtâ [sic!]*), is the undifferentiated whole; and 3) there exists the Germ of the Tathâgata (*tathâgatagotra*) (in every living being).

The embryo of the *Tathâgata* is believed to be in living beings like a germ within a seed; and the defilements that hide this embryo are like the bark-covering of a seed[47]. Or:

> Like a pregnant woman are the impure living beings,
> And the immaculate Essence in them is like that embryo,
> Owing to the existence of which, they become possessed of
> protection.[48]

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[41] "*Tathâgatasya ime garbhâḥ sarvasattvâḥ.*" *Ratnagotra*, p. 286 and Takasaki's n.140.

[42] "*Tathâgatas tathatâ eṣâṁ garbhaḥ sarvasattvânam.*" *Ratnagotra*, p. 287 and Takasaki's n.151.

[43] "*Tathâgatadhâtur eṣâṁ garbhaḥ sarvasattvânâm*". *Ratnagotra*, p. 290, and Takasaki's n.170 where this is considered the original meaning of the expression. Ruegg (1969, 507), however, takes '*Tathâgatagarbha*' to be a *tatpuruṣa* and thus to mean 'the womb of the Tathâgata (or Tathâgatas)' (*tathâgatânâṁ - garbhaḥ*). See also Ruegg 1989, 5, 19.

[44] *Ratnagotra*, p. 229: "The Ordinary people, the Saints, the Buddhas,– / They are indivisible from Reality, / Therefore, the Matrix of the Buddha [*Jinagarbha*] exists among [all] living beings;–/ ..."

[45] *Ratnagotra*, pp. 144, 161, 210, 218. See also 261.

[46] *Ratnagotra*, pp. 175, 189, 198 (the citation), 229, 281, 294–295.

[47] *Ratnagotra*, p. 273: "The Defilements are like the bark-covering [of a seed], and the Essence of the Tathâgata is akin to the germ within a seed."

[48] *Ratnagotra*, p. 275.

Tathâgatagarbha is also compared to gold as follows:

> Just as gold, though it is invisible among stones and sands,
> Comes to be seen by the process of purification,
> Similarly, in this world of living beings
> The Tathâgata (becomes visible by purification).[49]

The *Ratnagotra* also cites the *Mahâparinirvâṇasûtra* which says:

> O monks, with those elements which ye maintain to be in every case evanescent, suffering, impersonal, and impure, and on which ye practice the meditation (on that notion) repeatedly and increasingly, there exists (an essence which represents) the Eternity, the Bliss, the Purity, and the Highest Unity.[50]

Likewise, the *Aryaśrîmâlâsûtra*, quoted in the *Ratnagotra*, says:

> Only the Absolute Body of the Tathâgata is the Supreme Eternity, the Supreme Bliss, the Supreme Unity and the Supreme Purity.[51]

3.5.3. The Absolute is beyond the distinction of compounded and uncompounded

But if there is no phenomenal reality of compounded *dharma*s, we do not have to form the idea or concept of an absolute uncompounded *dharma* either. In other words, the reality is not uncompounded in contradistinction to compounded, but rather something transcending this duality.

Thus a *bodhisattva* should understand that the uncompounded cannot be made known through the exclusion of the compounded, or the other way round[52]. Consequently, "that entity which is the sign of something conditioned is neither other than the inexpressible realm, nor not other[53]." Or, according to the *Saṁdhinirmocanasûtra*:

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[49] *Ratnagotra*, p. 152. On pp. 268–269 the *Tathâgatagarbha* covered with limitless defilements is given nine different illustrations.

[50] *Ratnagotra*, p. 299.

[51] *Ratnagotra*, p. 218. In the LNKV, the *Tathâgatagarbha* is neither a "womb" nor an embryo, but is identified with the sub-consciousness (*âlayavijñâna*, like in the *Mahâyânasraddhotpâda* [Takasaki 1966, 53; Ruegg 1969, 507]).

[52] Conze 1984, 94 (P): "The Unconditioned cannot be made known through the exclusion of the conditioned, nor the conditioned through the exclusion of the Unconditioned." MMK, 7:35: "Because the existence of production, duration, and cessation is not proved, there is no composite product (*saṁskṛta*); And if a composite product is not proved, how can a non-composite product (*asaṁskṛta*) be proved?"

[53] Conze 1984, 647 (Ad in Gilgit ms.).

[54] SMD, I:1.

> ... the mentioned things are of two sorts: the compounded and the uncompounded. However, the compounded is neither compounded nor uncompounded; and the uncompounded is neither uncompounded nor compounded.[54]

This is because the words 'compounded' and 'uncompounded' are only metaphors invented by the Buddha, and, when taken literally, are expressions of the "vulgar experience" only. The common people (*pṛthagjana*) lack the noble transcendent wisdom (*âryalokottaraprajñâ*) with which the ineffable reality (*anabhilâpyadharmatâ*) can be known.[55]

As the truth is constituted by things that have no origin and are not terminated, "(N)irvâṇa is neither an existent thing nor a non-existent thing," and is not originated or terminated.[56] In LNKV, this kind of reasoning is explained as due to the fact that 'non-existence' is a relational concept receiving its meaning from its opposite, i.e. 'existence'[57]. Thus hare's horns are non-existent in reference to, for instance, bull's horns[58]. But as Mahâyâna ontology takes all extensions of verbal expressions to be non-existent[59], 'non-existence' loses its relational counterpart and becomes meaningless[60]. Thus, neither being nor non-being can be predicated on anything[61].

At this point, the only logical conclusion is that in reality there is no difference between *saṁsâra* and nirvâṇa[62]. So:

> "Worldly convention is not one thing and ultimate truth another. What is the Suchness (*tathatâ*) of worldly convention, that is the Suchness of ultimate reality."[63]

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55 SMD, I:2; I:5.

56 MMK, 25:10 and above p. 115 n. 15.

57 LNKV, p. 49: "Long and short, etc., exist mutually bound up; when existence is asserted, there is non-existence, and where non-existence is asserted, there is existence."

58 LNKV, p. 48: "The non-existence of hare's horns is asserted in reference to their existence (on the bull ...) ..."

59 LNKV,p. 48: "(B)ut really a horn itself has no existence from the beginning ..."

60 LNKV, p. 48: "The non-existence of what, is to be affirmed in reference to what? As to the other things, too, this reasoning from reference does not hold true."

61 LNKV, p. 47, 55, 64: "(F)or all things are devoid of the alternatives of being and non-being and are to be known, Mahâmati, as the horns of a hare, a horse, or a camel ..." P. 133: "Of neither existence nor non-existence do I speak, but of Mind-only which has nothing to do with existence and non-existence ..."

62 "(T)he Bodhisattva ... neither discriminates Samsara as Samsara, nor Nirvana as Nirvana. When he thus does not discriminate, they, i.e. Samsara and Nirvana, become exactly the same." (Conze 1984, 650 [Ad in Gilgit ms.].)
"(I)t is said from the highest view-point that the Phenomenal Life itself is Nirvâṇa, because (the Bodhisattvas) realize the unstable Nirvâṇa (*apratiṣṭhânanirvâṇa*), being indiscriminative of both (the Phenomenal Life and Nirvâna) (*Ratnagotra*, p. 219–220)." See also LNKV, p. 38.

63 Conze 1984, 529 (Ad in Gilgit ms.).

This is because

> (I)f the inexpressible realm were other than the entity which is the sign of something conditioned, then even just now that sign could not be apprehended through which there would be penetration into this inexpressible realm.[64]

Why this is so is expressed by *Nâgârjuna* as follows:

> If 'that which is bound' were released, 'being bound' and 'release' would exist simultaneously[65];

which is impossible[66], and "a living being neither is bound nor released"[67] which is logically the same as a living being being both bound and released.

According to the SMD, the enlightenment, teaching activity and *parinirvâṇa* of the buddhas are characterized by nonduality to the extent that in them there is neither enlightenment nor non-enlightenment, neither *parinirvâṇa* nor the absence of *parinirvâṇa*.[68] *Asaṅga* says likewise that the buddhas are "at once absolutely in nirvâṇa (*atyantanirvṛta*) and absolutely not in nirvâṇa"[69].

The identity between *saṁsâra* and nirvâṇa is also expressed with reference to the key concept of 'emptiness':

> Form is not one thing, and emptiness another; emptiness is not one thing, and form another. The very form is emptiness, the very emptiness is form.[70]

> And that emptiness that is neither produced nor stopped, is neither defiled nor purified, does not decrease or increase; and that which neither produced nor stopped, neither defiled nor purified, neither decreased nor increased, that is not past, future, or present.[71]

> The very form is emptiness and the very emptiness is form.[72]

> (F)orm is emptiness and the very emptiness is form; emptiness does not differ from form, form does not differ from emptiness; whatever is form, that is emptiness, whatever is emptiness, that is form ...[73]

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[64] Conze 1984, 647 (Ad in Gilgit ms.).
[65] MMK, 16:8.
[66] Above p. 105 and its notes 14 and 15.
[67] MMK, 16:5.
[68] SMD, 10:10: "Chez eux (=Les *Tathâgata*) il n'y a ni illumination, ni non-illumination; ni motion, ni non-motion de la roue de la Loi; ni grand Parinirvâṇa, ni absence de grand Parinirvâṇa."
[69] MASAMG, X:34.
[70] Conze 1984, 61 (P).
[71] Ibid.
[72] Conze 1984, 100 (P). See Lamotte's introduction to VKN (p. 47).
[73] *Hṛdayâ*, p. 81.

However, it was not only said that the uncompounded reality or enlightenment is not other than the compounded reality or *saṁsâra*. It was also said that it is not not-other because:

> (i)f the inexpressible realm were not other than the entity which is the sign of something condition(ed) ..., then even just now all the foolish common people would enter Parinirvana and would fully know the supreme enlightenment.[74]

Thus the supposed fact that *saṁsâra* is nirvâṇa can be taken to mean, not only that everybody is in nirvâṇa, but also that no one is in nirvâṇa. Thus *Nâgârjuna*, who had implied that there is a logical impossibility involved in the idea of something bound being released, wrote:

> The final cessation (*nirvâṇa*) of the conditioned elements certainly is not possible at all.
>
> Nor is the final cessation of even a living being possible at all.[75]

Consequently, enlightenment also is a "mere word and sign", nonexistent, "like a dream, like an illusion" and empty of any own character (*svalakṣaṇa*)[76]. Likewise, the absolute reality of uncompounded *dharma*s is illusory, too[77]. For this reason:

> Enlightenment is attained neither through a path nor through a nonpath.[78]

Only, this does not mean that enlightenment is something that cannot be attained in contradistinction to something that can be attained, because:

> Just enlightenment is the path, just the path is enlightenment.[79]

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[74] Conze 1984, 647 (Ad in Gilgit ms.).

[75] MMK, 16:4. *Ratnagotra*, p. 221: "The Saint approaches neither this world nor Nirvâṇa." LNKV, p. 77: "Nirvâṇa is like a dream; nothing is seen to be in transmigration, nor does anything ever enter into Nirvâṇa."

[76] Conze 1984, 631, 531 (Ad in Gilgit ms.), 211 (P), 643 (Ad in Gilgit ms.). "Unproduced is enlightenment, unproduced is a being, and so there is no trace of enlightenment, or of a being (anywhere). That is why nothing real is meant by the word 'enlightenment-being'." (Conze 1984, 118 [P].)

[77] "For the Dharmaelement (*Dharmadhâtu*) is empty of the Dharmalement. ... Because the own-being (*svabhâva*) of the Dharmaelement is empty of the own-being of the Dharmaelement." (Conze 1984, 180 [P].)

[78] Conze 1984, 617 (Ad in Gilgit ms.). According to the *Ratnagotra* (p. 307), the one whose mind has arisen towards enlightenment will never attain true knowledge if he thinks he is superior to those whose minds have not arisen towards enlightenment.

[79] Ibid. Likewise *parinirvâṇa* is said not to take place through the four noble truths or through cognition of the four noble truths; it "is the sameness of the four holy Truths." "It is where there is no ill nor cognition of ill, no origination nor cognition of origination, no stopping nor cognition of stopping, no path nor cognition of the path - the Suchness of those holy truths, their nonfalseness, their Dharmahood, (i.e.) the Dharma-element, fixed sequence of Dharma, stability of Dharma." (Conze 1984, 630 [Ad in Gilgit ms.].)

3.5.4. The ineffability of reality

Although it is hard to verbalize what is at stake here we may say that the authors of these texts are trying to point out that those who know only unenlightenment, as well as those who know only enlightenment have not really understood the Dharma. The latter alternative, however, should perhaps be modified to mean that those who regard enlightenment as something different from unenlightenment have not really understood. Only those who have known both unenlightenment and enlightenment, and have transcended this dichotomy are those who have understood.

Thus, one must first be able to make this distinction and then, and only then, abandon it[80]. One must see that enlightenment is not either-or but both-and or neither-nor. This is as far as we can get with mere discursive thinking and logical reasoning: to an endless dialectics of affirmation and negation[81]. In other words, the ultimate point of our sources seems to be ineffable. They are trying to express vebally an ineffable experience.

As our everyday experience, however, is essentially structured by language and as it is through language that we usually communicate with each other[82], experiences must, after all, be expressed verbally[83]. At this point our sources use negations without bestowing contrary attributes, provide contradictory attributes, and make use of metaphorical expressions[84] to somehow communicate what is in principle ineffable. One must only remember that what is said should not be taken literally[85].

This "ability to maintain a correct view of the status and role of religious language"[86] is called in the *Prajñâpâramitâ* "skill in means" (*upâyakauśalya*)[87]. All such words as 'nirvâṇa', 'Dharma-element' and 'Such-

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80 Cf. Ruegg 1981, 42: "(I)n order to penetrate the profundity of the teaching, therefore, one must understand the distinction between the two *satyas* ..." Gómez 1987b, 446 rightly remarks that silence presupposes speech.

81 Cf. Ruegg 1981, 25: "A thesis (*pakṣa*) implies a counter-thesis (*pratipakṣa*), but neither obtains in fact ... this world is thus in truth (*paramârthataḥ*) beyond truth and falseness (*satyânṛtâtîta*), and neither existence nor non-existence really applies."

82 Nonverbal communication being usually regarded as only complementary, although in some occasions it naturally may be the major form of communication.

83 Gómez (1987b, 447) remarks that it is impossible to remain in pure silence and still claim to practice a religion in a religious community. This, however, leaves open why the silent mystics then wanted also to "practice a religion".

84 Listed as "three methods" in de Jong 1972a, 4.

85 Cf. above p. 94.

86 Pye 1978, 110.

87 See Conze 1984, 113, 366 (P). According to Ad in Gilgit ms. (Conze 1984, 631), a *bodhisattva* comprehends ill or suffering (*duḥkha*) "but does not produce a thought which has ill for its objective support".

ness' are only a "skillful means" (*upâya*) to express and communicate an experience that is in principle ineffable.[88]

The Sanskrit word '*upâya*' means simply 'means', 'device', 'expedient', 'stratagem', but in Buddhist usage it has the connotation of skillfulness and for this reason it may be translated, as Pye has suggested, as 'skillful means'. Besides this, a common compound formation is '*upâyakauśalya*', 'skill in means'. There are a few occurrences of '*upâya*' in the Pâli Canon but as a technical term it appears first in the *Prajñâpâramitâ* literature, in the *Vimalakîrtinirdeśa* and in the Lotus Sûtra.[89]

The concept of '*upâya*' neatly summarizes the basic ideas of "Buddhist hermeneutics"[90]: 1) Take refuge in the Dharma, not in any person, 2) take refuge in meaning (*artha*), not in letter (*vyañjana*), 3) take refuge in wisdom (*jñâna*), not in cognition (*vijñâna*), 4) take refuge in texts with explicit meaning (*nîtârtha*), not in those of implicit meaning (*neyârtha*)[91]. Mere faith and recitation of texts leaves one sad and unhappy for a long time[92].

Thus it is asked in the SMD: What is the object designated by the words 'compounded' and 'uncompounded' if the words are only metaphorical? An answer is given that the object here is the ineffable reality by which the noble ones are perfectly enlightened. Only in order to enlighten others to the ineffable reality (*anabhilâpyadharmatâ*) they have (skillfully) coined the word 'compounded'.[93]

According to the *Ratnagotra*:

> Being unutterable, containing the Highest Truth
> Inaccessible to investigation and incomparable,
> Being the Supreme, and relating neither
> To the Phenomenal World nor to Nirvâṇa
> The sphere of Buddha is inconceivable even for the Saints[94].

The *Pitâputrasamâgama*, as quoted in *Śântideva*'s *Śiksâsamucaya*, says that

> The paramârtha is in fact the unutterable, the unthinkable, unteachable etc.[95]

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88 And thus the Absolute is neither behind the 'wordly' phenomena nor the totality of those phenomena, as, however, was explained by Th. Stcherbatsky and Stanislas Schayer (see Streng 1967, 76–78; de Jong 1972b, 7–8).

89 Pye 1978, 8–14.

90 This expression was coined by Robert Thurman (1978). See also Gregory 1983; Maraldo 1986; Lopez 1987 and 1988; Pyysiäinen 1989 and 1991.

91 MPPS, t. I pp. 536–538. See Lamotte 1988; Ray 1985, 160–169.

92 *Majj*, I 133.

93 SMD I:2 (=appendix 4).

94 *Ratnagotra*, p. 334. Moreover, on p. 143, the *Tathâgata* is said to be invisible, the Dharma unutterable and the *saṅgha* uncompounded (*asaṁskṛta*).

95 Quoted in Murti 1980, 244 and n.4: "*yaḥ punaḥ paramârthaḥ so'nabhilâpyaḥ anâjñeyaḥ aparijñeyaḥ, avijñeyaḥ, adesitaḥ, aprakâsitaḥ* etc." That the Absolute (*paramârtha*) is ineffable and without duality is also stressed in SMD I:1.

The SMD lists five characteristics of this Absolute as follows: it is known by intuition (*pratyâtmavedaṇîa*) and transcends speculation (*tarkagocara*), it is not the object of notions, it is ineffable, it escapes the vulgar experience, and it is beyond all controversies.[96]

The *Ratnagotra* also cites the *Anûnatvâpûrnatvanirdeśaparivarta* in which it is said:

> Therefore, O Śâriputra, the (ordinary) living beings and the Absolute Body are not different from each other. The living beings are nothing but the Absolute Body, and the Absolute Body is nothing but the living beings. These two are non-dual by meaning, and different merely by letters.[97]

That the dualistic thinking is intimately related to language may also be the point in the passage of LNKV, describing how in certain Buddhalands (*buddhakṣetra*) no words are used in communication. Instead, only gestures, steady looks, frowning, movement of the eyes and such expressions are used.[98]

Thus, it seems that the most natural explanation of all these paradoxes, negations of negations and metaphors is that they are meant to convey a vision of the world essentially influenced by mystical experience. This kind of explanation has previously been used with regard to *Yogâcâra/Vijñânavâda* idealism[99] and the notion of *âlayavijñâna* that has been explained not only philosophically or exegetically but with reference to yogic experiences as well[100].

My point, however, is that the mystics have not experienced the world and language as unreal in contradistinction to something real, but as transcending this dichotomy. We are allowed and we even must live in the world and use language, but only in such a way that no objective points

96 SMD, II:2: "Chez les Saint, l'Absolu est connu par intuition; chez les Profanes, la spéculation philosophique est affaire de tradition. Tu sauras donc par cet argument que l'Absolu transcende toute spéculation.
L'Absolu n'est pas objet de notions; la spéculation est atteinte par les notions. Tu sauras donc ...
L'Absolu est ineffable; la spéculation est du domaine de la parole. Tu sauras donc ...
L'Absolu echappé à l'expérience vulgaire; la spéculation est l'objet de l'expérience vulgaire. Tu sauras donc ...
L'Absolu echappé à toute controverse; la spéculation est objet de controverse. Tu sauras donc ..."

97 *Ratnagotra*, p. 234.

98 LNKV, p. 91.

99 May 1971, 309: "Plus profondément, l'idée de l'irréalité du monde extérieur est dirée de l'expérience de la méditation ..." Griffiths 1986, 82: "(I)t (= *Yogâcâra/Vijñânavâda* idealism) appears to have arisen out of an attempt to make ontological generalizations from experiences produced by meditative practices."

100 See Schmithausen 1987, 3.

of view are postulated. This means, for instance, that such metaphorical expressions as "form is emptiness" should be capable of being turned around to the form "emptiness is form", as in the Heart Sûtra[101], because neither of the members has priority over the other. Seen in this way, the mystical experience has more far-reaching consequences in Buddhist doctrine than previously supposed.

In LNKV this experience is described as follows:

> (B)y that realisation itself is meant that it is the realm of inner attainment; its characteristic features are that it has nothing to do with words, discriminations, and letters; that it leads one up to the realm of non-outflows (*anâsrava*); that it is the state of an inner experience; that it is entirely devoid of philosophical speculations and (the doings of) evil beings; and that, destroying philosophical speculations and (the doings of) evil beings it shines out in its own inner light of attainment.[102]

David Ruegg has expressed this mystical element of Mahâyâṇa as follows:

> (O)nly silence – a philosophically motivated refraining from the conceptualization and verbalization that belong to the discursive level of relativity and transactional usage – is considered to correspond in the last analysis to *paramârtha*, which is as such inconceivable and inexpressible in terms of discursivity.[103]

The discursive thinking that differentiates the world of silence is referred to with the word '*vikalpa*' as we read from Lindtner's quotation[104]. '*Vikalpa*' is derived from the verbal root *klrp-* the semantic range of which runs from the functions of ordering, arranging, and adapting to those of ornamenting and embellishing. The nominal form '*vikalpa*' with the prefix *vi-* has a distributive sense, meaning 'to create or contrive options', 'to set up antitheses', 'to ornament by opposing' etc.[105]

In Buddhist usage the word has preserved many of these connotations although it has to do more precisely with the constructive, conceptual and classificatory activities of the mind that create a world that does not exist as it appears to exist. Thus 'imagination' and 'construction'/'constructive' are good translations in these contexts.[106]

As the constructive mind cannot reach the ultimate reality, one should strive for an unconstructed awareness referred to by *Asaṅga*, who uses the

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101 See e.g. above p. 112 and its n.73.

102 LNKV, p. 128 (asterisked addition in brackets by I.P).

103 Ruegg 1981, 34. Likewise, Ruegg 1969, 297, 305, and 1989, 44, 48 emphasize that the Absolute (*paramârtha*) is ineffable (*avâcya, anabhilâpya*), beyond ratiocinative thinking (*atarkya*), inconceivable (*acintya*) and unknowable (*ajñeya*) and can only be grasped with intuition (*pratyâtmaṁ adhigantavyaṁ*) or with "non-conceptual gnosis (*jñâna*)".

104 Above p. 104.

105 Griffiths 1990, 85–86.

106 Griffiths 1990, 86.

name *nirvikalpakajñâna* ('unconstructive wisdom')[107]. This "highest form of Perfection of Wisdom"[108] is a kind of preverbal and preconceptual awareness that is thought to provide unmediated contact with reality[109].

The unconstructed awareness (*nirvikalpakajñâna*) clearly refers to an unintentional consciousness as it is said to be identical with its object, i.e. it is not directed towards something else, nor does it intend something different from itself[110]. Its object is said to be the ineffable reality (*anabhilâpyadharmatâ*), the true not-selfness (*nairâtmyadharmatâ*)[111]; and its content (*âkâra*) the absence of characteristics or defining marks (*animitta*)[112].

It does not mean the destruction of reality (*bhûtârthacitrîkâra*), nor does it refer to a state of non-reflexion (*anmanasikâra*), not to mention the cessation of mental representations and feeling[113]. Yet it excludes and surpasses the stage born of thinking and investigation (*savitarkasavicârabhûmi*)[114], and is neither not-wisdom (*ajñâna*) nor wisdom (*jñâna*)[115]. Likewise, its support (*âśraya*) is neither the thinking mind (*citta*) nor not the thinking mind (*acitta*), because it thinks not although it is issued from thought (*cittânvaya*)[116], and its cause is the impregnation of audition born of discourse (*sâbhilâpaśrutavâsanâ*)[117].

Besides this distinction between the unconstructed awareness and its preceding conditions and causes, there is also a distinction made between a fundamental unconstructed awareness (*mûlanirvikalpakajñâna*), and an unconstructed awareness that follows it (*tatpṛṣṭhalabdha*). The fundamental

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[107] See Griffiths 1990, 87–90.

[108] MASAMG, VIII:1.

[109] Griffiths 1990, 90.

[110] "N'étant pas différent (*visiṣṭa*) de son objet (*jñeya*), ce savoir est intuition (*nirvikalpatâ*) (MASAMG, VIII:18a)." Cf. MASAMG, VIII:20f: "Quand le savoir intuitif fonctionne (*carati*), plus aucun objet n'apparaît. On saura donc qu'il n'y a pas d'objet et, celui-ci faisant défaut, pas d'idée (*vijñapti*)."

[111] MASAMG, VIII:5: "Chez les Bodhisattva, l'objet (*âlambana*) du savoir intuitif est l'indicible nature des choses (*anabhilâpyadharmatâ*), la vraie nature non-substantielle (*nairâtmyadharmatâ*)."

[112] MASAMG, VIII:6: "Chez les Bodhisattva, l'aspect (*âkâra*) du savoir intuitif est l'absence de marques (*animitta*) inhérente à son objet de connaissance (*jñeyâlambana*). See Griffiths 1990, 87–90.

[113] MASAMG, VIII:2. Right reflexion (*yonisomanasikâra*) is even said to be the cause of the unconstructed awareness (MASAMG, VIII:4).

[114] MASAMG, VIII:2.

[115] MASAMG, VIII:18a: "[Ne portant] ni ici, ni ailleurs, il n'est ni non-savoir (*ajñâna*) ni savoir (*jñâna*) [d'après H: sans être un savoir, c'est un savoir]."

[116] MASAMG, VIII:3: "Chez les Bodhisattva, le support (*âsraya*) du savoir intuitif n'est ni pensée (*citta*) ni non-pensée (*acitta*), parce qu'il ne pense pas et qu'il est issu d'une pensée (*cittânvaya*)."

[117] MASAMG, VIII:4: "Chez les Bodhisattva, la cause (*gzi*) du savoir intuitif est l'imprégnation d'audition provenant du discours (*sâbhilâpasrutavâsanâ*) et la réflexion correcte (*yonisomanasikâra*)."

unconstructed awareness is said to be threefold: it is 1) intuition (*nirvikalpa*) of satiety (*saṁtuṣṭi*), of non-error (*aviparyâsa*) and of non-language (*niṣprapañca*)[118]. The unconstructed awareness that comes afterwards is fivefold: it is investigation (*vicâra*) of penetration (*prativedha*), of recollection (*anusmaraṇa*), of prediction, of synthesizing (*saṁsarga*) and of success (*samṛddhi*)[119].

Thus the unconstructed awareness is clearly an unmediated and non-dualistic mystical experience: in it the preceding conditions and causes are transcended and one is believed to become directly aware of the reality, without the mediation of language and discursive thinking.

According to Griffiths, the unconstructed awareness cannot count as a pure consciousness event (PCE) as it is said to have an object and content and it has phenomenological attributes[120]. However, as we saw, its object is not an intentional object and its content is a rather peculiar one, the absence of characteristics. And, *Asaṅga*, indeed, does describe the unconstructed awareness in a manner reminiscent of Forman's forgetting model:

> The (fundamental) unconstructed awareness is like a man with eyes closed (*nimiñjitacakṣus*); the awareness that comes after this (*tatpṛṣṭhalabdha*) is like the same man with the eyes open (*unmiñjitacakṣus*).[121]

And:

> It is known that the (fundamental) unconstructed awareness is like space (*âkâśa*); the awareness that is posterior to it (*tatpṛṣṭhalabdha*) is like forms (*rûpa*) that manifest themselves in this space.[122]

Thus it seems that the unconstructed awareness, nevertheless, is an experience of empty or contentless consciousness. The ineffable reality (*anabhilâpyadharmatâ*) is its object and the absence of characteristics its content, just as this is so for God in Eckhart's experience of *gezücket*: they afterwards provide the necessary ideological content for the PCE which is contentless when it occurs[123]. Moreover, the ineffable nature of things and the absence of characteristics are expressions that convey more obviously than 'God' the idea of an empty consciousness. If the only content of consciousness is absence of characteristics, we are entitled to say that there is no content (except in the sense of the presence of the absence).

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118 MASAMG, VIII:19.2: "Le savoir intuitif [fondamental] (*mûlanirvikalpakajñâna*), lui aussi, est de trois sortes, selon qu'il est intuition (*nirvikalpa*) de satiété (*saṁtuṣṭi*), de non-méprise (*aviparyâsa*) ou de non-discoursion (*niṣprapañca*)." See above p. 104.

119 MASAMG, VIII:19.3.

120 Griffiths 1990, 87.

121 MASAMG, VIII:16a.

122 MASAMG, VIII:16b. MASAMG, VIII:2 says that the unconstructed awareness is not material.

123 See Forman 1990c, 107–112 and above p. 41.

However, I do not consider it proven that the unconstructed awareness is a PCE, but only take it as a serious possibility. In any case, the fundamental unconstructed awareness is something like a hole in the series of conscious states beginning with the impregnation of audition born of discourse (*sâbhilâpaśrutavâsanâ*) and ending with the posterior unconstructed awareness. As such it is a mystical experience that has induced changes in the way the Buddhists have experienced their being-in-the-world and interpreted it conceptually. An essential element of this *Seinsverständnis* is the conviction that the true reality is ineffable and escapes discursive thinking.

3.5.5. The three aspects of existence

In texts of the *Vijñânavâdins* the ideas of relative and absolute truth as well as those of dependent origination are interpreted to form a consistent theory of the "three essences" or "three aspects"[124] (*trisvabhâva*) of existence, namely the dependent (*paratantra*), the imaginary (*[pari] kalpita*) and the absolute (*parinispanna*) aspect[125]. These three aspects describe what it is that appears to us in perception (the dependent aspect), the way it appears (the imaginary aspect) as well as the absolute reality on which perceptual phenomena are superimposed (the absolute aspect).[126]

That which appears to us is a cluster of false imaginations (*asatkalpa*)[127], i.e. representations, ideas and cognitions that arise, dependent on "seeds" (*bîja*) planted in the mind by previous acts[128]. The way the de-

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124 As Griffiths (1986, 84) translates.

125 SMD, VI:3; MASAMG, II:1; TRSVB, 1. Literally '*parinispanna*' has the meanings of 'developed', 'perfect', 'real', 'existent'. 'Absolute' is a common translation and used by, e.g., Tola & Dragonetti 1983, 234. Griffiths (1986, 88) uses 'perfected'. In his commentary on chapters I–IV of SMD, *Asaṅga* explains that by taking 'compounded' as a metaphor the imaginary aspect (*parikalpitasvabhâva*) is established. By stating that a verbal expression, nevertheless, always has an object the dependent aspect (*paratantrasvabhâva*) is established. And the expression 'ineffable reality by which the noble ones are perfectly enlightened' establishes the absolute aspect (*parinispannasvabhâva*) (SMD, p. 182 [trad.] and 53 [Tibetan]).

126 In the SMD, it is said that people superimpose the imagined aspect on the dependent and absolute aspects (SMD, VII:10). The absolute aspect is like the reality seen with healthy eyes, the dependent aspect like the images conveyed by eyes with a disease, and the imagined aspect is like the disease in the eyes (SMD, VI:7).

127 Also called '*abhûtakalpa*' in *kârika* 8, '*vikalpa*' in *kârika* 30 and '*abhûtaparikalpa*' in the *Mahâyânasûtrâlaṁkâra* (see Tola & Dragonetti 1983, 232 and its n.11).

128 TRSVB, 2, 4. The SMD (VI:5; VII:25) takes the dependent aspect to mean the production of *dharmas* by reason of causes. MASAMG, II:1–2; II:15:1: "Because it is issued (*utpanna*) from its own impregnation-seeds (*vâsanâbîja*)

pendent aspect appears is the way of imagination[129], i.e. the false imaginations have no basis[130] outside the human mind, and are "mere representations" (*vijñaptimâtratâ*)[131], or names and conventions that permit things to be mentioned in language[132]. The absolute (*parinispanna*) aspect, for its part, is "(t)he eternal non-existence" of all appearances[133].

Thus is established the doctrine from which the *Vijñânavâdin*s have derived their name, i.e. the doctrine that reality is "cognition only". The first trace of this kind of an ontology is found in the *Dasabhûmikasûtra*, dating from the first century AD, where it is stated that "the triple world is the thinking mind (*citta*) only"[134]. This is then repeated in works like the *Lankâvatârasûtra*, the *Avataṁsakasûtra* and the **Mahâyânaśradhotpâda*. In the *Saṁdhinirmocanasûtra* and in the works of *Vasubandhu* and *Asanga*, the word 'representation' ('*vijñapti*') is substituted for '*citta*'.[135]

According to the *Lankâvatârasûtra*, the external world has no existence of its own; it is only a concept (*prajñapti*), or only the thinking mind (*cittamâtrataṁ*), and all beings are like a vision or reflection since there is nothing outside the mind[136]. The perceived world is "no more than Mind

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it is dependent on conditions. Because after its birth it is incapable of subsisting by itself for a moment it is called dependent." MASAMG, II:17: "In what sense is the dependent nature 'dependent'? – In the sense that it's birth is dependent on something else, viz. the impregnation-seeds." On the impregnation-seeds, see Suzuki 1930, 438; Conze 1967, 348; Tola & Dragonetti 1983, 232; Griffiths 1986, 85.

129 TRSVB, 2: "(A)s it appears is the imaginary (aspect) ... because its existence is only a mental creation."

130 TRSVB, 5: "And what is the unreal mental creation? The thinking mind (*citta*), because as it is imagined and as it imagines its object, so it is not at all."

131 According to *Asanga* (MASAMG, II:3; II:15:1).

132 SMD, VI:4: "Ce sont des noms et des conventions attribuant aux choses une nature propre et des spécifications permettant de les mentionner dans le langage courant." See SMD VII:25.

133 TRSVB, 3: "The eternal non-existence as it appears of what appears must be known as the absolute aspect, because of its inalterability." Tola & Dragonetti 1983, 234 interprets this as "the eternal not being so as it appears of that what appears." In the SMD (VI:6; VII:25), the absolute aspect is said to be the Suchness of *dharma*s; in the MASAMG (II:4), it is the complete absence of all objective character (*arthalakṣaṇa*) in the dependent aspect. See Wood 1991, 10.

134 "*Citta-mâtrataṁ idaṁ yad idaṁ traidhâtukaṁ*" (quoted in May 1971, 274).

135 See Suzuki's introduction to LNKV, p. xl. '*Vijñapti*' has been translated as 'representation' (ibid), 'information' (Conze 1967, 353) and 'idea' (Lamotte e.g. in his translation of the MASAMG, p. 92). It is of the same root than '*vijñâna*' (see May 1971, 306) and, according to Griffiths (1986, 80), refers to "all mental events with intentional objects", i.e. mental events where something is represented to the experiencer.

136 LNKV, p. 133: "Multiplicity of objects evolves from the conjunction of habit-energy and discrimination; it is born of Mind, but is regarded by people as existing outwardly: this I call Mind-only.

(*citta*) itself"[137] of which it is a manifestation[138]. In the *Sagâthakaṁ* portion, this is summarized as follows:

> The world of form, of no-form, and of desire, and Nirvâṇa are in this body; all is told to belong to the realm of Mind.[139]

It comes only from one's clinging to appearances that the manifestations of one's own mind are regarded as reality (*dharmatâ*)[140]. When this clinging is withheld, "(intellectual) penetration"[141] into true reality is produced and three processes corresponding to the three aspects take place: knowledge (*parijñâ*), elimination (*prahâṇa*) and fulfillment (*prâpti*)[142].

Knowledge means here the non-perception of duality, elimination refers to the fact that appearances no longer manifest themselves, and fulfillment means that intuitive knowledge (*sâkṣâtkriyâ*) about the absolute reality of the nonexistence of duality is obtained[143]. Thus, we are again faced with the conviction that discursive thinking leads to false views and only mystical intuition guarantees a real understanding.

In the SMD, this is argued for by first judging the images perceived in meditation as "nothing but representations" (*vijñaptimâtratâ*) and not different from the thinking mind itself. Then it is reasoned that as the true vision is reached in meditation, it follows that the supposed objective support of cognition (*vijñânâlambana*), i.e. all material things, are in fact nothing but ideas.[144]

It is to this passage that *Asaṅga* refers, besides the *Dasabhûmika*, when he notices that even though ordinary people admit their dream-images to

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"The external world is not, and multiplicity of objects is what is seen of Mind; body, property, and abode – these I call Mind-only."
P. 145: "The triple world is no more than a concept (*prajñapti*), there is no reality in its self-nature ..." See also p. 38.

137 LNKV, pp. 34, 40.

138 LNKV, pp. 3, 36.

139 LNKV, p. 245.

140 LNKV, p. 18: "It comes from one's clinging (to appearances) that the manifestations of his own Mind are regarded as reality (*dharmatâ*)." See also p. 3.

141 Tola & Dragonetti (TRSVB, 31) accept this Edgertons translation for '*prativedha*'.

142 TRSVB, 31: "When the (intellectual) penetration of the (true) reality of objects is produced, it is considered that (three) processes, corresponding to each nature, (take place), simultaneously, in their order: knowledge, elimination and obtention [or: fulfillment]."

143 TRSVB, 32–33: "And it is admitted that knowledge is non-perception; elimination is non-manifestation and obtention [or: fulfillment] is perception beyond causes, intuition.
"Through non-perception of duality, the form of duality disappears; with its disappearance the absolute inexistence of duality is obtained." See also Tola & Dragonetti 1983, 245. Cf. LNKV, p. 60.

144 SMD, VIII:7–9.

be mere representations, they do not admit this with reference to their wakeful perceptions. Yet they could, in principle, know this on the basis of the Scriptures or by reasoning. So, to understand the *vijñaptimâtratâ*, says *Asaṅga*, one has to be really "awakened" (*prabuddha*)[145].

However, the *Vijñânavâdin*s did not purport merely to expound the irreality of being, but to transcend the dichotomy of being and non-being, of duality and non-duality[146]. Thus the imaginary aspect is said to be characterized by being and non-being because "it is grasped with existence" although it ultimately is mere non-existence; the dependent aspect is likewise characterized by being and non-being because it exists due to the existence of an illusion but does not exist in the way it appears to exist; and the absolute aspect has the characteristics of being and non-being because it exists as the existence of non-duality, while this non-duality yet is only the inexistence of duality.[147]

The last formulation, however, can be defined further so that it also embodies being and non-being in the sense that it is "the existence of the nonexistence of duality"[148]. In other words, the absolute aspect is not merely a negation, i.e. the inexistence of duality, but something existing, i.e. the existence of the non-existence of duality. This may sound odd but, nevertheless, it is precisely the same point Sartre makes with his example of the existence of Pierre's non-existence in the café[149].

In the same manner, the imagined aspect is said to have as its essence both duality and non-duality because the imagined object entails imagined duality, but in reality is nondual. The essence of the dependent aspect is duality and non-duality because it appears with duality which, however, is illusion. The absolute aspect is also considered dual and non-dual because its essence (*svabhâva*) is defined with reference to duality and this essence is by nature the non-existence of this duality, i.e. non-duality.[150]

Asaṅga, for his part, says that the dependent aspect is on the one hand the imagined one and on the other the absolute one, and that this is the

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[145] MASAMG, II:6–7.

[146] TRSVB, 10: "The profoundness of the (three) aspects is admitted because they are being and non-being, because they are duality and unity, and because of the identity of essence of the purity and the impurity."

[147] TRSVB, 11–13.

[148] TRSVB, 25: "The absolute (nature), (which is found) there, and (which is) the existence of the inexistence of duality, is penetrated; and so therefore it is said that only it (the absolute nature), in that moment, 'is and is not'."

[149] Sartre 1943, 44–47. Wood (1991, 18–22) rejects this idea as meaningless.

[150] TRSVB, 14–16. According to MASAMG II.11., our ideas are characterized by duality in the sense that there is the image that is seen (*sanimitta*) and the act of seeing or vision (*sadarśana*), but also by unity because ultimately they do not have different objects.

reason why the Buddha had identified *saṁsâra* and nirvâṇa[151]. In its absolute aspect, the dependent aspect is eternal, in its imagined aspect it is transitory; and with regard to these two taken together it is neither eternal nor transitory[152]. Likewise, the three aspects are ultimately neither different from each other nor identical[153]. Thus the absolute aspect, in the last resort, transcends even the principle of representation only (*vijñaptimâtratâ*)[154], and true ontology turns out to be ineffable and within the reach of mystical experience only.

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[151] MASAMG, II:28: "En quelle intention ... Bhagavat a-t-il dit, dans la Brahmaparipṛcchâ ..., que le Tathâgata ne voit pas le Saṁsâra et ne voit pas le Nirvâṇa? – Puisque la nature dépendante (*paratantrasvabhâva*) est imaginaire (*parikalpita*) d'une part et absolue (*parinișpanna*) d'autre part (cf. ḍ17), Bhagavat, en s'exprimant de la sorte, avait en vue l'identité (*nirviseṣa*) du Saṁsâra et du Nirvâṇa."

[152] MASAMG, II:30: "La nature dépendante (*paratantrasvabhâva*), par sa partie absolue (*parinișpannabhâga*), est éternelle; par sa partie imaginaire (*parikalpitabhâga*), elle est transitoire; par ses deux parties ensemble, elle n'est ni éternelle ni transitoire."

[153] MASAMG, II:17.

[154] MASAMG, III:9: "(O)n doit encore supprimer, par la notion de nature absolue (*parinișpannasvabhâvabuddhi*), la notion du Rien qu'idée (*vijñaptimâtratâbuddhi*) ..." "(C)omment entre-t-il (=the *bodhisattva*) dans la nature absolue (*parinișpannasvabhâva*)? – Il y entre en rejetant (*nirâkarana*) encore la notion de Rien qu'idée (*vijñaptimâtrasaṁjñâ*)."

4. THE BUDDHA AND THE ABSOLUTE

4.1. The Buddhas as Preachers of Dharma

In the introductory chapter I remarked that the idea of soul as a metaphysical entity often entails an idea of a transcendent God as its macrocosmic counterpart[1]. Thus it is not surprising that Buddhism denies not only the existence of this kind of a soul but also of an eternal God who could save the soul. However, as Buddhism is essentially based on the effect produced by the Buddha's person and his message as it was interpreted and remembered[2], it is important to explore whether in this respect the Buddha serves any function similar to God.

The uniqueness of all buddhas derives from the fact that they are believed to have found the way to nirvâṇa by themselves[3], and to have led others to it[4]. As they are different in this way from all other beings, they are beings *sui generis*, as J.W. de Jong has expressed it[5]. Thus:

> There is only one person whose birth into the world is for the welfare of many folk, for the happiness of manyfolk, who is born out of compassion for the world, for the profit, welfare and happiness of *devas* and mankind. Who is that one person? He is a *Tathâgata* who is *Arahant*, a fully Enlightened One.[6]

A *Tathâgata* is "unique, without a peer, without counterpart, incomparable, unequalled, matchless, unrivalled, best of bipeds (*dipadânaṁ*)."[7] Likewise, when asked, the Buddha announced that he was neither man nor god (*deva*) but a buddha[8]; and when Cunda the goldsmith offered him his last meal the Buddha explained that it could not be digested by gods or men, only by a *Tathâgata*[9].

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1 Above p. 40. See also Löwith 1967.
2 See above pp. 19–20.
3 Here a buddha differs from enlightened disciples or "learners" (Skr. *śrâvaka*) whom he leads to nirvâṇa.
4 Here a buddha differs from *pratyekabuddhas* ('solitary enlightened ones') who realize the truth by themselves but do not preach it (see Kloppenborg 1974).
5 de Jong 1979, 27. See also Smart 1972, 25.
6 *Ang*, I 22. Transl. by F.L. Woodward.
7 Ibid.
8 *Ang*, II 38–39.
9 *Dîgha*, II 126–128.

As unique beings in this way, buddhas represent the uncompounded reality in the compounded reality. This is reflected in the *Aśokâvadâna* where it is told that when the Buddha set foot on the threshold of the city gate of Râjagṛha, the blind recovered their sight, the deaf became able to hear and the lame walked[10]. In other words, something ultimately good is supposed to have shone from the Buddha's figure with such force that the compounded reality of suffering underwent a transformation in his presence.

The same idea may be present in the story in which the Buddha meets king Aśoka as a child on his almsround in a previous life. The child throws a handful of dirt in the Buddha's begging bowl pretending to give him "some ground meal", and thinks he will be reborn as a king because of this meritorious act.[11] The Buddha understood the boy's good intention and displayed such a smile that rays of various colors issued forth from his mouth. After roaming around the world they vanished to the Buddha's left palm, and the Buddha said that one hundred years after his death the boy would become a king named Aśoka in the city of Pâṭaliputra[12].

Only a buddha could understand that the child's spontaneous act was an expression of an original purity of mind not polluted by the cultural classifications of adults. Thus, in this unusual situation marked by the presence of the Buddha, dirt and disorder were neither dirt and disorder nor not dirt and disorder.

In Hînayâna, this uniqueness is tied to individual buddhas who periodically appear in the world[13], and it is believed that there can be only one perfect buddha at a time, as is the case with the *cakravartin râja* as well[14]. The uniqueness of a buddha does not, however, totally exclude his share of our common humanity as he is a human being who has become a buddha. He is "the best of bipeds", i.e. best of men in that he has transcended his ordinary human condition. For this reason he is also called a "great man" (*mahâpuruṣa*), a title reserved for buddhas and mythical universal monarchs (*cakravartin râja*) that rule the whole world, the both

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10 ASK, p. 198: "Now whenever Blessed Buddhas set their feet down on the threshold stone of a city gate with a resolute mind, it is usual for various marvels to occur. The blind recover their sight, the deaf become able to hear, the lame can walk again." (ASK, Przyluski, 226.) In the MHV (I 257) the blind saw, the deaf heard, the insane recovered their reason, the sick were healed and women with child were safely delivered when the Buddha entered Benares. The BHC (I:25) tells how wild beasts did not harm anyone and how all sicknesses were healed at the moment of the Buddha's birth.

11 ASK, pp. 198–200; cf. ASK, Przyluski, 226–227.

12 ASK, pp. 202–203; cf. ASK, Przyluski, 227–228. See below p. 155.

13 The *Mahâpadânasutta* (*Dîgha*, II 2–11) identifies six buddhas in addition to Gautama, the *Buddhavaṁsa* 24.

14 *Digha*, II 225; *Ang*, I 27–28; *Kosa*, t. II p. 198: "Deux Cakravartins, de même que deux Bouddhas, n'apparaissent pas à la foi."

of which are recognized by the 32 major and 80 minor marks of the body[15].

A buddha is simultaneously man and buddha, but *not a god* (*deva*) since only men can attain buddhahood. Thus, words like 'God' and 'divinization' are misleading in buddhological connection unless their Christian connotations are clearly dismissed.[16] If we thus put aside the explicit religious meanings of God, Christ and the Buddha, we can make a religion-phenomenological comparison on a structural level.

As the realities of God and men are in Christianity totally incommensurate after the Fall, a special being that bridges this gap is needed. He is, of course, Christ who is at once God and man.[17] Likewise, buddhas (and *pratyekabuddhas*) seem to be the only beings who, from the Buddhist's point of view, can establish a connection between the compounded and uncompounded realities[18]. Thus, Peter Masefield is right in maintaining that in *Theravâda* sources the message about nirvâṇa, i.e. the Dharma, is in a sense revealed by the Buddha[19], although it is not preached by him alone but by the disciples as well[20]. Their preaching activity, however, is dependent on the fact that the Dharma has first been made known in the world by a buddha.

The Dharma is not just a collection of the Buddha's teachings, but an independently existing reality, the original Absolute of Buddhism embodying nirvâṇa[21]; and it is on an intimate contact with this Dharma that the teachings of the buddhas are based. The Dharma thus bears a certain resemblance to the eternal speech (*vâc*) not produced by human agency (*apauruṣeya*) upon which the *Vedas* were believed to be based.[22] In congruence with this, the first converts made by the Buddha are explained to have not merely "seen the Dhamma, attained the Dhamma, known the Dhamma" but even "plunged into the Dhamma" (*pariyogâḷhadhammo*)[23].

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15 See, *Dîgha*, II 16–19, 169–199; III 58–79, 142–145; *Suttanipâta* 3.7.554; *Ratnagotra*, pp. 344–349; Conze 1984, 583–587 (Ad in Gilgit ms.), 657–664 (P); LNKV, p. 12, 68.

16 Cf. Snellgrove 1987, 29–34 and also Smart 1972, 22, 25; 1981, 445–446.

17 René Gothóni (1987, 75, 83), partly following Lars Thunberg, discusses the mediating role of Christ in light of Edmund Leach's theory of binary codes mediated by a third category (see Morris 1987, 220–224). As a founder of religion, Jesus (like the Buddha) represents one type of religious authority (on these, see Lanczkowski 1978, 84–105), or one type of "technicians of the sacred" (as Eliade 1974b, 33 calls them).

18 Cf. also Snellgrove 1987, 23.

19 Masefield 1986, 45–54, 59–69, 80, 103–104, 141–144.

20 See e.g. *Vin*, I 20–21. See Ray 1985, 151; Gómez 1987a, 529.

21 Rosenberg 1924, 82; Takasaki 1966, 26.

22 Kloppenborg 1974, 6–7; Masefield 1986, 45–54; Gombrich 1988, 33–34, 42, 71. Cf. *Ṛgveda*, I,164: 45–46. See above p. 93 and n.120.

23 *Vin*, I 12.

The identification of the Dharma and nirvâṇa as well as the belief in their real existence are ideas presupposed by early Indian epistemology, that was haunted by the notion that to know something is to become part of the known[24]. Consequently, even in non-Mahâyâna sources the Buddha was also thought to somehow participate in the Dharma and nirvâṇa known by him, an idea later developed in more detail in Mahâyâna[25].

The evolution of these conceptions concerning the Buddha and the Dharma is a good example of how Buddhism as a founded religion has solved the problem of the relationship between its history and mythology. Although it is admitted that the Dharma came to be known among men of our aeon because of the preaching of Buddha Śâkyamuni, it does not mean that he had invented it himself. On the contrary, the Dharma is believed to have existed from eternity, but having only been forgotten and subsequently revealed anew by Śâkyamuni[26].

Given the Indian cyclical conception of time and the importance of continuity in every religion, it then became necessary to consider Śâkyamuni only one of many buddhas who all had preached Dharma in various aeons and always with the result that it had, after a time, disappeared again. Thus were born the various ideas and predictions concerning the disappearance of the good Law[27]. Thus:

> "There is, o Kassapa, no disappearance of the true Dhamma until a counterfeit (*paṭirûpaka*) Dhamma will appear. But when, o Kassapa, a counterfeit Dhamma will appear, then the true Dhamma will disappear."[28]

> "If, o Ânanda, women had not been allowed to go forth from home to homelessness according to the Dhamma and Vinaya declared by Tathâgata, then the good life (*brahmacariya*) would have lasted for long, for a thousand years would the true Dhamma have lasted. But now, o Ânanda, ... the true Dhamma will last only for five hundred years."[29]

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[24] See above p. 100.

[25] See also Takasaki 1966, 27; Streng 1967, 36, 38.

[26] *Samyutta*, II 25: "Whether, o monks, *tathâgatas* will appear or not appear this nature of things (*dhâtu*), this conditioning by Dhamma (*dhammaṭṭhitatâ*), this orderliness based on Dhamma (*dhammaniyâmatâ*), this dependent nature of things (*idappacayatâ*) just stands." MHV, I 132: "When they have obtained time and opportunity of place and time, and maturity of karma, the Leaders preach the true dharma each time it is born anew."

[27] Lamotte 1958, 210–222. Reynolds (1985) has made a distinction between this "Dharma-cosmogony", the "rupa-cosmogony" of the *Aggaññasuttanta*, and the cosmogonical theory inherent in the idea of the net of mutual dependencies. See also Pyysiäinen 1988, 80–82.

[28] *Samyutta*, II 224. Tr. by mrs Rhys Davids assisted by F.L. Woodward.

[29] *Ang*, IV 278. Tr. by E.M. Hare.

4.2. The Dharma-body as a Representation of the Absolute

4.2.1. Hînayâna Buddhism

The Buddha's intimate relationship with the Dharma is expressed in the notion of the Buddha having a Dharma-body (*dharmakâya*). In the *Saṁyuttanikâya*, monk *Kassapa* is said to be entitled to regard himself as the Buddha's own son and to be born of his mouth and of the Dhamma because the Buddha has a Dhamma-body (*dhammakâya*) and a Dhamma-nature (*dhammabhûto*)[30].

In another passage, we read about a certain monk having for a long time been willing to see the Buddha face to face. The Buddha, however, tells him that there is nothing to see in his vile body since he who sees the Dhamma sees the Buddha and he who sees the Buddha sees the Dhamma.[31] In the *Majjhimanikâya*, the Buddha is in a similar manner called a Dhamma-lord (*dhammassâmî*) who has a Dhamma-nature (*dhammabhûto*)[32].

John Strong takes this '*dhammakâya*' to be a metaphorical expression signifying only "the body of the Buddha's doctrine, the collection of his Teachings", thus making a clear distinction between it and the transcendent Dharma-body of Mahâyâna texts[33]. If this is the case, then monk *Kassapa* would be born of the Buddha's mouth as he has become the Buddha's disciple after having heard the body of teachings (the Dhamma) from the Buddha. Because the Buddha in this way teaches the Dhamma, he has a "Dhamma-nature", i.e. the nature of knowing the Dhamma, and consequently, he who sees the Dhamma sees the Buddha because the Dhamma is more important than the teacher's person.

The only statement that does not fit so well into this scheme would be "he who sees me sees the Dhamma". Unless this is only a stylistic feature based on the claim for symmetry, the Buddha's body or person would be interchangeable with the Dhamma. Given the importance of the Buddha's role as a bridge between the realities of *saṁsâra* and nirvâṇa, it is in fact more likely that the Buddha's body and the body of his teachings

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[30] *Samyutta*, II 221.

[31] *Samyutta*, III 120. Cf. BHC, XXIV.20: "Whether I remain or whether I pass to peace, there is only the one thing, namely that the Tathâgatas are the Body of the Law (*dharmakâya*); of what use is this mortal body to you?"

[32] *Majj*, III 195. In the commentarial literature '*dhammabhûta*' is taken to mean 'one who has become dhamma', 'one who has dhamma as his nature' (Carter 1978, 93).

[33] Strong 1983, 105.

were nevertheless somehow identified even in Hînayâna, and thus *dhammakâya* would also refer to the Buddha himself[34].

This equivalence of the Buddha's body and his teachings is explicitly established in a much later *Theravâda* text called *Dhammakâyassa Atthavaṇṇanâ*. By identifying stages of the Buddhist path with parts of the Buddha's body this text clearly shows that '*dhammakâya*' refers both to the Buddha's teachings and his body[35]. The disposition is as follows:[36]

The mental ability of omniscience = head

nibbâna = hair

the fourth *jhâna* = forehead

the mental ability to attain the thunderbolt (*vajirasamâpattiñâṇa*) = the hair between the eyebrows (*unnâ*)

the visual fixation on the blue meditation object (*nîlakasiṇa*) = the eyebrows

the most excellent divine eye, eye of knowledge, all-seeing eye, Buddha-eye, Dhamma-eye (*dibbacakkhu-paññâcakkhu-samantacakkhu-buddhacakkhu-dhammacakkhu*) = the eyes

the divine ear = the ears

the mental ability of a converted Buddhist (*gotrabhû*)[37] = the nose

the knowledge of the fruits of the path and liberation (*vimutti*) = the cheeks

the knowledge of the thirty-seven wings of enlightenment = the teeth

mundane and supramundane mental abilities (*lokiyalokuttarañâṇa*) = the lips

the knowledge of the four paths = the canine teeth

the knowledge of the four truths = the tongue[38]

the irresistible knowledge = the jaw

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34 Reynolds (1977, 375–379) seems to be aware of this twofold meaning of '*dhammakâya*'. Cf. Snellgrove 1987, 115 where the *dharmakâya* is said to represent "from one point of view the sum total of the Buddha-Doctrine, and from another the absolute supramundane state into which a Buddha passed on entering final nirvâṇa." *Dharmakâya* is that absolute Buddha-nature which is the alfa and omega of the Dharma (ibid. pp. 36–37).

35 Cf. also Reynolds 1977, 385–387. Of course this does not *prove* that this is also the case in the *Tipiṭaka*.

36 Coedès 1956, 255–256, 260–261.

37 See Rhys Davids & Stede 1972, 255 s.v. *gotrabhû*.

38 In the *Prajñâpâramitâ*, the Buddha's tongue, with which he is said to cover the world, is a symbol of his absolute veracity (Conze 1984, 39 [P]).

the mental ability to obtain unequaled liberation (*anuttaravimokkha*) = the neck

the knowledge of the three properties of things = the throat

the knowledge of the four subjects of self-confidence = the arms

the mental ability of tenfold mindfulness (*dasânussatiñâṇa*) = the fingers

the seven limbs of enlightenment = the chest

the knowledge of intentions and dispositions = the pectorals

the capacity of the ten powers = the stomach

the knowledge of the net of mutual dependencies = the navel

the five powers of the five faculties = the buttocks

the four perfect efforts = the thighs

the ten paths of meritorious action = the legs

the four bases of supernatural power = the feet

psychic mastery of moral practices = the *saṅghâtî*-robe

remorse[39] = the robe (*cîvara*)

knowledge of the eightfold path = the inner garment (*antaravâsaka*)

the four applications of mindfulness = the belt

4.2.2. Mahâyâna Buddhism

In the *Prajñâpâramitâ*, the Buddha's relationship to the absolute reality of the Dharma has been described paradoxically. On the one hand, he is called 'Buddha' "as the truly real fact" because he has penetrated the real meaning of *dharma*s and has known the Dharma as it really is[40], on the other hand buddhas are unthinkable and immeasurable like space and can

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[39] Rhys Davids & Stede (1972, 732) translate '*hirottappa*' as "shame & fear of sin". When '*ottappa*' is derived from Skr. '*uttapya*', its meaning is 'to be regretted, tormented by remorse' (ibid., p. 166 s.v. *ottappa*). As '*Hiri*' refers to a sense of shame, '*hirottappa*' could be translated as 'remorse' although some may find in it the same Christian bias as in 'sin'.

[40] Conze 1984, 530 (Ad in Gilgit ms.): "He is called 'Buddha' as the truly real fact (*bhûto 'rtho*). Moreover, he has fully known the truly real Dharma, ... he has penetrated to the real meaning, he has fully known all dharmas as they really are – therefore he is called a 'Buddha'."

only be apprehended through the fact that they have no fixed residence (*niradhiṣṭhâna*)[41].

So far as it can be verbalized, the Buddha's real essence is the Dharma-body (*dharmakâya*)[42] whose role, however, is not very central in the *Prajñâpâramitâ*. Instead, the Buddha's intimate relationship with the Perfection of wisdom itself is emphasized[43]. The Perfection of Wisdom is that principle of which the buddhas are born[44], and it is said that those who want to see the Dharma-body and the physical bodies of buddhas should listen to the Perfection of Wisdom[45].

The body in which the Buddha appears to various kinds of beings is called *âsecanaka-âtmabhâva*, i.e. a body so beautiful that one can never be satiated by looking at it, or *prâkṛtya-âtmabhâva*, i.e. an original or a real body[46]. This body is adorned with the 32 major and 80 minor marks of a great man[47].

Despite the fact that these marks are said to belong to the Buddha's real or original body it is said that the Buddha should not be attended to through the 32 marks, as those marks – like all *dharmas* – have no real essence[48]. Thus the colorful descriptions of the Buddha's body are just another metaphorical way of praising the ineffable absolute reality. The manifestation of this reality before human eyes in the person of the Buddha is only due to the Buddha's skill in means (*upâyakauśalya*)[49]. Ultimately it is neither real nor unreal[50].

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41 Conze 1984, 216 (P). According to *Nâgârjuna* (MMK, 22:15), the Buddha is "unchanging and beyond all detailed description".

42 "His contemplation of the Buddha-body as it really is, is the contemplation of the Dharma-body as it really is (Conze 1984, 176 [P])."

43 "Those who honour this perfection of wisdom, they thereby worship Me, as well as the Buddhas and Lords of the past, future and present (Conze 1984, 484 [Ad in Gilgit ms.])." See also *Ratnagotra*, p. 207 and Takasaki's note 63 on it.

44 The Gilgit and Central Asian manuscripts of P call the Perfection of Wisdom the genetrix (*jananî*, see Conze 1967, 181) of the Tathâgatas (Conze 1984, 345). It is also said that the Perfection of Wisdom supersedes the relics in worth because the relics have gone forth from it (Conze 1984, 249 [P]).

45 Conze 1984, 254 (P). Thus *Prajñâpâramitâ* and the Buddha are interchangeable in the sense that as the Buddha embodies the Dharma so does the Dharma, in the form of *Prajñâpâramitâ*, embody the Buddha (See Gómez 1987b, 448). Neither of the members of the metaphor has priority.

46 Conze 1984, 41 (P). The Gilgit manuscripts use the word '*prakṛtyaâtmabhâva*' instead of '*âsecanaka-âtmabhâva*'. See Conze 1984, 1 (introduction) and Conze 1967, 291.

47 The marks are listed in Ad in Gilgit ms. (Conze 1984, 583–587) and listed and explained in P (Conze 1984, 657–664).

48 Conze 1984, 551–552 (Ad in Gilgit ms.).

49 Conze 1984, 622 (Ad): "The Tathagata, however, has the skill in means which enables him to be reborn there."

50 MMK, 22:16: "The self-existence (*svabhâva*, added by I.P.) of the 'fully completed' (being) is the self-existence of the world. The 'fully completed (being) is without self-existence (and) the world is without self-existence."

In the *Ratnagotra*, the Buddha's Dharma-body, as we saw in the previous chapter, was identified with absolute reality so that the whole phenomenal reality could be reduced to it. Thus, "the *Tathâgata* is the highest Absolute Essence" and "reaches up to the limit of the space", and his life lasts as long as the utmost limit of the world.[51] In this sense, the "multitudes of living beings" are said to be included in the Buddha's wisdom (*buddhajñâna*), and the Buddha's body is said to "penetrate everywhere"[52].

As the Dharma-body thus is ultimately the only reality,

> (f)rom the ultimate standpoint (*paramârthikaṁ*),
> Buddhahood is the sole Refuge of the world,
> Because the Sage has the body of the Doctrine,
> And because in that the Community sets the ultimate goal.[53]

Or:

> From the Buddha comes the Doctrine,
> Owing to the Doctrine there is the Holy Community,
> In the Community exists the Matrix, which is
> The element of Wisdom, aiming at its acquisition;
> Its acquisition of the Wisdom is the Supreme Enlightenment,
> Which is endowed with the Qualities, 10 Powers and others,
> And accompanied by altruistic Acts for all living beings.[54]

As there is in reality only one Buddha and one Buddha-vehicle (*yâna*) the Buddha does not discriminate between beings in his teaching. In chapter V of the Lotus, this pervading quality of the Buddha's Dharma is described with a simile comparing Dharma to a rain-cloud (*'dharmameghâ'*) that pours rain on all beings alike[55]. Or:

> As the rays of the sun and moon descend alike on all men, good and bad, without deficiency (in one case) or surplus (in the other);
> So the wisdom of the Tathâgata shines like the sun and moon, leading all beings without partiality.[56]

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51 *Ratnagotra*, p. 213. SMD, intr:2: "Il est sorti (de la transmigration) pour entrer dans l'égalité des trois temps (ou dans l'éternité)." MASAMG, II:33:I,9 "*tryadhvasamatâniryâtaḥ*: il pénètre l'égalité des trois temps".

52 *Ratnagotra*, p. 197. On p. 304, precisely the Dharma-body is said to be that which pervades everything and is infinite like space (see also p. 322). SMD, intr:2 declares that the Buddha has the universe as his limit and that he "terminates where the space terminates." MASAMG, II:33:I,10: "*sarvalokadhâtuprasṛtakâyaḥ*: ses corps s'étendent par tous les univers." II:33:II, 20e, 20–21: the Buddha reaches the Dharma-element, exhausts the space and has attained the ultimate limit (*aparântakoṭiniṣṭhaḥ*).

53 *Ratnagotra*, p. 184.

54 *Ratnagotra*, pp. 153–154.

55 Lotus, pp. 118–127. See Pye 1978, 43–47.

56 Lotus, p. 136. MASAMG, X:28:7: "Il pénètre tout le monde par l'éclat de sa loi (*dharmaprabhâ*), comme le soleil."

Thus there is no nirvâṇa apart from buddhahood, or:

> Buddhahood and Nirvâṇa
> Are one and the same in the highest viewpoint.[57]

And, "(N)o one can realize nirvâṇa apart from Buddhahood"; or:

> (W)ithout the acquisition of Buddhahood,
> There is no attainment of Nirvâṇa,
> Just as it is impossible to see the sun,
> Avoiding its light and rays.[58]

The buddhahood, however, is said to manifest itself in three forms: as the body of own essence (*svâbhâvikakâya*), the body of enjoyment (*sâṁbhogakâya*) and the apparitional body (*nirmâṇakâya*)[59].

The body of own essence is the uncompounded, indivisible and inconceivable Dharma-body, and the latter two are bodies with visible form (*rûpakâya*) and appear on the basis of the Dharma-body like visible forms appear in space[60]. The body of enjoyment is said to be the natural outflow (*niṣyanda*) of the body of own essence and to manifest the Dharma for the sake of living beings. The apparitional (*nairmâṇika*) bodies, for their part, refer to those bodies in which the Dharma-body appears as various historical buddhas[61]. Thus "the Lord never shows its real nature[62], though it appears in various forms, according to the conditions of the living beings" without, however, really being separated from his Dharma-body.[63]

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57 *Ratnagotra*, pp. 258, 261.

58 *Ratnagotra*, pp. 263, 266.

59 *Ratnagotra*, pp. 289–290, 324; MASAMG, X:1. Cf. LNKV, pp.51–52. The *Sarvâstivâdins* attributed to the Buddha the following three bodies (See Lamotte 1958, 689–690): 1) The Buddha's physical body was called the body of retribution (*vipâkakâya*), the physical body (*rûpakâya*) or the body of birth (*janmakâya*); 2) the Buddha could produce in various circumstances fictive bodies of magical creation called *nirmâṇakâya*; 3) The *dharmakâya* was given a new interpretation as a collection of compounded (*saṁskṛta*) *dharmas* that were free from the outflows (*âsrava*) numbering five as follows: morality (*śîla*), meditative concentration (*samâdhi*), wisdom (*prajñâ*), liberation (*vimukti*), and knowledge and vision of the liberation (*vimuktijñânadarsana*).

60 In the *Prajñâpâramitâ*, the Buddha is said to emit from his tongue rays from which arise lotuses with "buddha-frames" (*buddhavigraha*) on them (Conze 1984, 39 [P]). These buddha-frames are magical creations that the Buddha conjures up to demonstrate Dharma; and after seeing a "buddha-frame" a *bodhisattva* starts longing for a body of a buddha and will never again lack attention to the Buddha (Conze 1984, 167 [P]).

61 The SMD (X:3) defines the apparitional body as simultaneous with the birth of the universe.

62 Cf. MASAMG, X:28:10: "Bien qu'ils apparaissent partout, ils ne sont pas perçus par les six senses."

63 *Ratnagotra*, pp. 326–331; MASAMG, X:1, X:6. MASAMG, X:37 explains that although the body of enjoyment and the apparitional body (here:

In the SMD, the Dharma-body is defined through negations as transcending the 'worldly' existence in every respect:

> The Dharma-body of *Tathâgatas* is the revolution of the bodily basis (*âśraya*), the exit (of transmigration) resulting from the good practice of the stages (*bhûmi*) and the perfections (*pâramitâ*). For these two reasons, this Dharma-body is inconceivable (*acintya*): it escapes discourse (*niḥprapañca*) and is not dependent on effort (*anabhisaṁskâra*).[64]

In the MASAMG, the revolution of the bodily basis (*âśrayaparâvṛtti*) is divided into five according to the five factors of existence (*skandhas*), over which it brings sovereignity (*vibhutva*) through *rûpaskandhaparâvṛtti*, *vedanâskandhapravṛtti* etc.[65]

As the Dharma-body thus is attainable to anyone in principle, its status as the Buddha's own essence (*svabhâvikakâya*) must be explained. Thus, it is said that as numerous persons (*apramâṇakâya*) reach enlightenment the Dharma-bodies are different, but as the supports, intentions and acts of Dharma-bodies are identical, the Dharma-bodies are identical.[66] Similarly, "the buddhas are one but innumerable[67]".

According to the MASAMG, the Dharma-body has five characteristics: 1) the revolution of bodily basis when all obstacles are overcome, 2) own essence based on white *dharmas*, 3) non-duality (*advaya*) of being and non-being, of compoundedness and non-compoundedness and of plurality and unity, 4) eternity (*nityalakṣaṇa*) and 5) inconceivability (*acintya*).[68]

In like manner, the *Ratnagotra* declares the Dharma-body to be neither real nor unreal, as it appears "as only a vision in this world"[69]. Thus

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niṣyandakâya) are transitory, the *Tathâgata*'s body (*tathâgatakâya*) is eternal because these two bodies lean on the Dharma-body, and the joy and apparitions never cease.

64 SMD, X:1. In MASAMG, VII:11 the Dharma-body is said to be eternal (*nitya*). In the *śrâvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* this achievement is called '*vimuktikâya*' (Liberation-body) (SMD X:2. See also MASAMG, I:48).

65 MASAMG, X:5.

66 MASAMG, X:8: "Puisque leurs [= de les Dharmakâya des Buddha Bhagavant] supports (*âsraya*), leurs intentions (*abhiprâya*) et leurs activités (*karman*) sont identiques, il faut dire que les Dharmakâya son identiques. Mais puisque, d'innombrables personnalités (*apramânakâya*) arrivent à l'illumination (*abhisambudhyante*), il faut dire que les Dharmakâya sont différentes." The same holds for the two other bodies that are dependent on the Dharma-body.

67 MASAMG, X:28.2: "Les Buddha sont un (*abhinna*), mais innombrables (*aprameya*)."

68 MASAMG, X:3.

69 *Ratnagotra*, p. 359: "Just as, on the pure surface of the Vaiḍûrya stone,/ There appears the reflection of the body of the highest god;/ Similarly, on the pure surface of the mind in the world,/ There appears the reflection of the body of the Highest Sage./ ... So one should not see it as either real or unreal." Also, it neither appears nor disappears (p. 377).

it represents the same non-dualism of dualism and non-dualism we found in the previous chapter.

Moreover, it is said that the buddhas have superseded the *skandhas* (*skandhâtikrânta*) but, nevertheless, reside in the *skandhas* (*skandhavihârin*); and the latter ones are neither different nor identical to the former ones.[70] And:

> The perfectly Enlightened One (*abhisambuddha*) does not exist, but all the buddhas are not non-existent. In each moment, there are innumerable buddhas constituted by existence (*bhâva*) and non-existence (*abhâva*).[71]

Thus, the figure of the Buddha has been transformed into a symbolic representation *par excellence* of the mystical experience he attained, as well as of its consequences.

4.3. The Buddha's Skill in Means

In the Lotus, the relationship between the Buddha of the Dharma-body and his various historical manifestations are explained with the idea of skillful means (*upâya*)[72] in the sense that Gautama's supposed enlightenment and *parinirvâṇa* are regarded as only a skillful means to teach people. In reality, he had already reached enlightenment and *parinirvâṇa* a long time ago.[73] The ultimate unity behind all seemingly separate buddhas is expressed in two places in the sûtra[74].

First, in the seventh chapter, it is reported that "Of yore, monks, in the past, incalculable, more than incalculable, inconceivable, immense, measureless aeons since, nay, at a period, an epoch far beyond, there appeared in the world" a certain buddha whom Gautama Buddha remembers despite the immeasurable span of time that seems to separate them[75]. That this can be taken to presuppose the ultimate identity between the seemingly separate buddhas becomes clear in the 15th chapter dealing with the immeasurable duration of the Buddha's life[76].

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[70] MASAMG, X:28:5: "Les Buddha ont dépassé les agrégats (*skandhâtikrânta*), mais résident dans les agrégats (*skandhavihârin*). Ces [derniers] ne sont ni identiques aux premiers ni différents d'eux (*naivânyâ nânanyâḥ*)."

[71] MASAMG, X:28:3.

[72] See above pp. 114–115.

[73] See Masson-Oursel 1923, 594; Pye 1978, 53–56.

[74] See Snellgrove 1987, 52–54; Smart 1973, 119–120; Kloppenborg 1974, 8.

[75] Lotus, pp. 153–154.

[76] In MASAMG, II:33 one of the qualities of a buddha is said to be that he has obtained equality with all the buddhas (*sarvabuddhasamatâprâptaḥ*).

In this chapter, the Buddha declares that he has reached enlightenment "many hundred thousand myriads of *koṭis* of aeons ago", and thus is unlimited in the duration of his life. This means that the Buddha is everlasting and does not become extinct even though he himself occasionally announces his own extinction in *parinirvâṇa*.[77] According to the *Ratnagotra*:

> The word 'immutable' (*asaṁskṛta*) should be understood as being opposite to being conditioned or caused (*saṁskṛta*). Here 'being conditioned' (*saṁskṛta*) means the thing, of which origination, lasting, as well as destruction are inconceivable. Because of the absence of these characteristics, the Buddhahood should be seen as having neither beginning, middle nor end, and being represented as the immutable (*asaṁskṛta*) Absolute Body.[78]

The Buddha's skill in means (*upâyakauśalya*) is illustrated in the Lotus with a parable about an intelligent physician whose sons drank some poisonous liquid and fell sick while the father was abroad. When the father returned, the sons greeted him and beseeched him to heal them from their pains. The father then prepared a remedy which was immediately taken by those sons who had right notions despite their pains; but those sons who had perverted notions would not take the medicine although they also wanted to be cured.[79]

Then the father decided to use a skilfull means and announced to his sons that he had grown old, decrepit, advanced in years and that the term of his life was at hand[80]. He went to another part of the country and sent a message to his sons, declaring that he had died. Due to the grief caused by the message, the perverted notions of the sons began to turn to right ones and the boys took the remedy prepared by their father and were healed. After having heard this, the father returned, and according to the Buddha and his listeners - was not to be rebuked of falsehood since his intent had been good and right, i.e. he had only used a skillful means.[81]

In a similar manner, the Buddha displays skillful means in order to educate beings, without there being any falsehood on his part. Accordingly, he is called the selfborn father of the world (*lokapîta svayambhu*), the healer, the protector of beings[82]. Even though the Buddha thus is one, his "children" are of various dispositions, and for this reason the idea of three different vehicles (*yâna*) – of *śrâvaka*s, *pratyekabuddha*s and *bo-*

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77 Lotus, pp. 299–303.

78 *Ratnagotra*, pp. 156–157. On p. 260, the *Jñânâlokâlaṅkârasûtra* is cited: "Being in Nirvâṇa from the very outset, the Tathâgata, the Arhat, the Perfectly enlightened One is of neither origination nor destruction." The essence of the Buddha is not created or born, and does not die or undergo suffering because it is eternal (p. 256).

79 Lotus, pp. 304–305.

80 Cf. *Dîgha*, II 100 where the Buddha announces that his end is near.

81 Lotus, pp. 305–306.

82 Lotus, pp. 306, 309–310.

dhisattvas – has been skilfully used by the Buddha although in reality there is only one Buddha-vehicle and one nirvâṇa for everyone[83].

The Buddha appears on earth in the period of decay of that world and skillfully uses the idea of three vehicles to make people leave the triple world (*traidhâtuka*) in which they are so attached to the pleasures of the senses that they do not realize the dangers of old age, suffering and death. In reality, however, the Buddha uses only one Buddha-vehicle and causes all beings to reach complete nirvâṇa.[84]

This is again illustrated with a parable of a father and his sons. The father had an old house with only one door, and one day that house caught fire when the father was outside and the little boys inside. The father thought that although he himself would be able to come out of the house safely and quickly, the little boys didn't have the understanding to run until it would be too late. He could now try to gather his sons in his strong arms to take them out, but there would be the possibility that the boys might start running here and there in amusement and he would not be able to catch them in time. Likewise it would be in vain to try to talk to them and to urge them to run out because the boys were too small and ignorant.[85]

The father therefore decided to use a skillful means and shouted to his sons that all their favorite toys, such as bullock-carts, goat-carts and deer-carts, were waiting outside in the yard to be played with. This got the boys to run out safely, but as soon as they were delivered they started to ask for the promised toys. The father, however, did not have three kinds of carts for them but only ox-carts, built of the most precious substances. Yet he was not guilty of falsehood because he had saved the lives of his sons, and in addition had given them a very precious gift.[86]

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[83] Lotus, pp. 42–48, 53, 128–129, 141, 181, 189.

[84] Lotus, pp. 42–43, 53, 76–81; Lotus, Conze pp. 207–210. The idea of periodical evolution and decay of the world is presented in *Dîgha*, III 84–97, *Kosa*, t. II pp. 203–209, and the MHV, I 285–301 but without any mention of buddhas (see Reynolds 1985).

[85] Lotus pp. 72–73; Lotus, Conze pp. 203–205.

[86] Lotus pp. 74–76; Lotus, Conze pp. 205–206. Kern has 'bullock-carts' for Conze's 'ox-carts'.

4.4. The Buddha and the World

4.4.1. The Buddha's body as a symbol of the cosmos

In the *Aśokâvadâna*, a *Sarvâstivâdin* work, the Buddha's body appears as a symbol or a scale model of the cosmos[87], in a way reminiscent of the *Puruṣasûkta* of the *Ṛgveda* where the primeval man covered the whole world until the various classes of society were formed out of the parts of his body[88]. Thus, we hear that the Buddha can predict a person's future destiny by issuing rays from his mouth. After roaming throughout the whole cosmos, the rays reenter the Buddha's body either from behind or from the front, depending on whether he wants to reveal a past action or predict a future action, respectively. The places where the rays reenter the Buddha's body correspond to various destinies the Buddha wants to predict to the person in question, according to the following scheme:[89]

soles of feet = in hell

heels = as an animal

big toes = as a hungry ghost (*preta*)

knees = as a human being

left palm = as a *balacakravartin* king[90]

right palm = as a *cakravartin* king[91]

navel = as a god (*deva*)

mouth = as an enlightened disciple

hair between the eyebrows (*ûrṇâ*) = as a *pratyekabuddha*[92]

the protuberance on the head (*uṣṇîṣa*)[93] = as a buddha

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87 "*Trisâhasramahâsâhasra lokadhâtu*" (litt. 'the world element of three thousand and great thousand (worlds)'), the largest unit of Buddhist cosmology. The *trisâhasramahâsâhasra lokadhâtus*, however, are believed to be as many as the sands of the Ganges. See VKN, appendice 1, p. 395.

88 *Ṛgveda*, X,90:1–16.

89 ASK, pp. 201–202. Also in *Prajñâpâramitâ*, the Buddha illuminates the cosmos with his smile (Conze 1984, 41 [P]) and predicts the future of beings with rays issued forth from this smile (Conze 1984, 422 [P]). See also LNKV, p. 13.

90 *Asoka* was a *balacakravartin râja* ('armed ruler of the world') par excellence as he made true the age old myth of a righteous ruler of the world, albeit with the exception that he had to use force (see Strong 1983, 44–54).

91 Cf. the previous note.

92 See above p. 126 n.4.

93 According to Alfred Foucher (1949, 116–117), the iconographic habit of presenting the Buddha with a protuberance on the top of the head originated when

According to this scheme, both in the cosmos and in the body, that which is good is above and that which is bad is below. Without pushing the argument too far, one may note that the feet associated with the bad destinies are the limbs that tie man to earth, and the head as a center of intelligence and spirituality is associated with the otherworldy state of a buddha or a *pratyekabuddha*.

The *Dhammakâyassa Atthavaṇṇanâ* equated nibbâna in the same way with the Buddha's hair, a very common symbol of freedom and imprisonment[94]. Wild long "dread-locks" have symbolized the freedom of African warriors and the Rastafarians as well as the Indian "matted hair ascetics" (*jaṭila*). Likewise, the Buddha is always pictured with his hair, although the texts explicitly state that he cut off his hair as his followers that *submitted* themselves to the Buddha's Dhamma and *vinaya* have done.

In the Lotus, it is said that a *bodhisattva* who "keeps, reads, promulgates, teaches, writes" this discourse on Dharma (i.e. the Lotus Sûtra) will have a pure body with a hue as clear as the lapis lazuli[95]. And:

> On that perfect body he will see the whole triple universe; the beings who in the triple world disappear and appear, who are low or lofty, of good or of bad colour, in fortunate or in unfortunate condition, as well as the beings dwelling within the circular plane of the horizon and of the great horizon, on the chief mountains Meru and Sumeru, and the beings dwelling below in the (Avîci) and upwards to the (reality limit); all of them he will see on his own body.[96]

Being self-born (*svayambhu*), the *bodhisattva* who keeps etc. this discourse on Dharma will see the whole world in his own body like an image is seen in a mirror, including the buddhas.[97] In this way, the limits of one's body are extended as coextensive with the limits of the world and the subject-object structure of one's being-in-the-world is dissolved. The cosmic dimension of the Buddha's body is thus something that is believed to be attainable by anyone.

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the sculptors were willing to present the Buddha with his hair on the condition that each lock was made to curl to the right as implied in the list of the marks of a great man (see *Dîgha*, III, 142–145).

94 This may be due to the fact that as it grows out of the body hair is a marginal element between internal and external realities (see Douglas 1984, 121). One could also apply here D.W. Winnicott's (1953, esp. 89–91) idea of transitional phenomena in the "intermediate area of experience" between "inner psychic reality" and "external world".

95 Lotus, p. 349: "... the Bodhisattva Mahâsattva who keeps, reads, promulgates, teaches, writes this Dharmaparyâya shall have the eight hundred good qualities of the body. It will be pure, and show a hue clear as the lapis lazuli; it will be pleasant to see for the creatures."

96 Lotus pp. 349–350.

97 Lotus, p. 350–351 (=appendix 2).

4.4.2. The otherwordliness of the Buddha

The *Mahâvastu* of the *Mahâsaṁghika-Lokottaravâdin*s brings to the fore the fact that as a symbol of the cosmos the Buddha was not simply identified with the defiled reality of *saṁsâra*. On the contrary, whereas to the *Sarvâstivâdin*s the Buddha-*dharma*s were compounded, but pure (*śuddha*) and free from the outflows (*âsrava*)[98], the *Lokottaravâdin*s took the buddhas to be completely transcendent. This is easy to understand when we remember that, according to the *Mahâsaṁghika*s, only transcendent *dharma*s were real. From this ontological solution it naturally follows that buddhas are transcendent because otherwise they would be unreal, which is an impossibility.

In the MHV, the following dreams of the Buddha are said to have come true after his enlightenment: 1) That the earth was his bed, mount Sumeru, the *axis mundi*, his pillow, his left arm rested in the eastern ocean, the right one in the western ocean, and the soles of his feet in the southern ocean. 2) That *kṣîrikâ*-grass[99] sprouted from his navel and reached the heavens. 3) That reddish creatures with black heads covered him from soles to knees. 4) That four vultures of different colors came flying through the air from the four quarters and turned all white after kissing the soles of his feet. 5) That he walked on a mountain of dung without being soiled by it.[100]

The first two dreams together with the fourth are clearly equivalent to the *Aśokâvadâna*'s body symbolism, but the third one seems to be fairly mysterious. The text itself interprets it to mean that people who have done service to a buddha will be reborn in heaven[101] but this seems quite arbitrary. Possibly it is only a reproduction of a yogic hallucination which is irrelevant in this study. The fifth dream, for its part, is directly connected to the MHV's tendency to emphasize the purity of the buddhas living in the impure world.

The same idea also appears in the Ratnagotra[102] where we find a parable about a householder's only son who fell into a pit of night-soil and whose father hurried to enter the pit without any feeling of disgust and saved his only son. Then it is explained that the pit of nightsoil stood for "the phenomenal life", 'only son' for "the living beings" and 'householder' for "the Bodhisattva who ... has attained the direct perception of the immutable Absolute". The point is explained to be that a *bodhisattva* who remains in the world for the sake of others is nevertheless not polluted by the world.[103]

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98 See Lamotte 1958, 689–690.

99 Edgerton (1953, 200) takes this to probably mean a kind of a date–tree.

100 MHV, II 131–132.

101 MHV, II 133.

102 As a quotation from the *Sâgaramatiparipṛcchâ*.

103 *Ratnagotra*, pp. 246–247 (=appendix 3). Cf. p. 220: "Here, in this world,

Thus, one of the fourteen ways a *bodhisattva* of the third stage can "lapse and fail" is that he teaches buddhas to be of this world (*lokasamatâye deśenti*)[104]. Yet "there is nothing in the Buddhas that can be measured by the standard of the world, but everything appertaining to the great seers is transcendent (*lokottara*)"[105]. This idea has consistently guided the presentation of the Buddhas's life in the *Mahâvastu*, starting from the description of his immaculate conception and birth[106].

According to this text, the birth of a buddha is due to cosmic laws as the *bodhisattva* is born virginally on the strength of his own *karmic* merit[107]. Thus, he can also be said to remain uncontaminated by any 'worldly' qualities from the beginning. He is a transcendent light of the world (*lokâloka*) and comes down from heaven to earth in order to enlighten men who have become blind[108]. In accordance with this, he is born in a "mind-made" body (*manomayakâya*) from the right side of his mother, yet without piercing that side[109]. This other-worldliness of a buddha even goes so far that he is reported to have deliberately chosen a mother that had 10 months and seven days of life left because she should not make love after the birth of a buddha[110].

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the Bodhisattva is not entirely involved among all living beings because he has completely rejected all tendencies of desires by means of the Transcendental Intellect. (At the same time), he is not remote from them since he never abandons them – owing to his Great Compassion." MASAMG VII:11 says that the Buddha, although residing in the world, is not soiled by worldly *dharmas* (*lokadharma*).

104 MHV, I 75–76.

105 MHV, I 125.

106 But this is not the invention of the *Lokottaravâdins*, as birth without the intercourse of the parents is clearly implied in *Majj*, III 120–121 and *Dîgha*, II 13, already.

107 MHV, I 113: "'Now, at this moment, is it time for me to depart hence. For men are sunk in gross darkness, are blinded, and of dimmed vision. Attaining me, they will be delivered'." MHV, I 114–115: "'... Bodhisattvas are not born of the intercourse of a father and a mother, but by their own merit independently of parents'." MHV, I 134: "Although the Sugata's corporeal existence is not due to the sexual union of parents, yet the Buddhas can point to their fathers and mothers. This is mere conformity with the world."

108 MHV, I 77–78: "But though he had found the eternal blissful abode that is honoured of *Asuras* (= evil giants) and *Suras* (=gods), he renounced it for the sake of enlightening men. He came down to the surface of earth, was born in the family of Ikṣvâku, and stood in glory, immovable and firm.
"Desiring to enter the womb of Queen Mâyâ in the form of a noble lotuswhite elephant, he, the light of the world, left the realm of *Tuṣita*(-gods), and came down to earth to raise up the people whom he saw were wanton and blind and who had succumbed to doubt and unrighteousness."

109 MHV, I 117–118, 174, II 18.

110 MHV, II 3–4. The death of the mother as a rule when a *bodhisattva* is born is known already in *Majj*, III 122 and *Dîgha*, II 14 but no reason is given for this rule.

Now, contrary to the *Theravâda* texts, the Buddha is no longer a man who became a buddha, but a buddha who became man. Consequently, he must have been in an ultimate sense perfect in every way, even before his enlightenment[111]. Thus, when *Theravâda* texts present Gautama as indulging in sensual pleasures before his enlightenment, the *Mahâvastu* raises the question of how the Buddha's son, *Râhula*, was born if *bodhisattvas* do not indulge in pleasures of the senses. The author, however, begs the question by simply saying that "Râhula, passing away from Tuṣita, came down into the womb of his mother"[112]. A little later, *Râhula*'s birth is explained as "mere conformity with the world" on the part of the Buddha[113].

The Buddha's transcendent quality is then described in an *en bloc* inserted passage, beginning with his conduct, "root of virtue", walking, standing, sitting and lying down, all of which are said to be transcendent (*lokottara*). The same holds true of his body, wearing of the robe, eating and teaching.[114]

However, while being transcendent the buddhas appear at the same time to be ordinary mortals, since they accommodate themselves to the world[115]. They practice the four postures of the body even though they feel no fatigue, they bathe, clean their teeth and wash their feet even though no dirt is ever found on them. This washing is "mere conformity with the world."[116]

The buddhas put on robes as a "mere conformity with the world" since no cold wind could harm them. For the same reason they sit in the shade even though the sun would not torment them, take medicine though they are never ill and eat food though never hungry. They also take on the semblance of being old, even though in reality they have overcome old age. All in all, the buddhas remain in the world for a certain span of time though they could immediately leave it if wished.[117]

What is striking in the MHV is that the Buddha's transcendence is described, among other things, by his being born in a "mind-made" body.

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[111] MHV, I 132: "Although they have reached perfection by the merits won in the course of countless kalpas, they make it appear as though they were at the beginning."

[112] MHV, I 121.

[113] MHV, I 134: "From Dîpaṁkara onwards, the Tathâgata is always free from passion. Yet (the Buddha) has a son, Râhula, to show. This is mere conformity with the world."

[114] MHV, I 132.

[115] MHV, I 132: "The Buddhas conform to the world's conditions, but in such a way that they also conform to the traits of transcendentalism."

[116] MHV, I 132–133.

[117] MHV, I 133. There are in the *Mahâvastu* also some directly paradoxical expressions of the Buddha's transcendence, as for instance in the statements that the Buddha walks without touching the ground and thus without killing creeping insects, and that, nevertheless, the wheel impresses of the soles of his feet are left on the ground (MHV, I 225, 257).

As a body suited for dwelling in the immaterial levels of the *rûpa-* and *arûpalokas* it is, in fact, 'worldly' and thus completely different from the Dharma-body[118]. Yet the Buddha of the MHV cannot be simply identified with the apparitional "mind-made" buddhas of magical creation (*nirmâṇakâya*) so excplicitly distinguished from the Dharma-body in Mahâyâna texts, because even in the MHV the Buddha is said to have conjured up (*nirmita*) these magical creations, which means that they are distinct from his real essence[119].

This lack of conceptual precision may be said to derive from the fact that the text appears to develop an innovative expression of religious experience ideologically between early Buddhism and Mahâyâna[120]. The theme of the buddhas being *lokottara* is central to the extent that the relationship of the transcendent buddha to the world is bypassed with the mere formula: "this is mere conformity with the world". The *Sarvâstivâdin* theory of the three bodies is not explicitly made use of. The MHV expresses in a mythological form the idea that the Buddha represents the uncompounded reality in the compounded reality. Thus the Buddha's body serves as a symbol that bridges the two spheres of reality, creating a unity that the mystics in their own way seek to attain.

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118 See Reynolds 1977, 383–384.

119 MHV, I 140–142, 220.

120 Michael Pye (1978, 60 and n. 1) characterizes *Mahâvastu* as a "bridge work" and takes it to contain "much mythological enthusiasm but little intellectual penetration."

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. Mysticism

The aim of this study was to provide answers to the following questions: 1) In what sense could Buddhism be above all mysticism, or rest essentially on mysticism, or be based on pure mysticism? 2) What in this case is meant by mysticism? 3) Is Buddhism essentially based on pure mysticism?

The first question was answered in chapter 1., by saying that Buddhism could be said to be essentially mystical, if mysticism penetrated its central doctrines and the related practice (p.16). By 'central' was meant, on formal grounds, the doctrines related to the Buddha's sacred biography and to man's position in the world as well as to his ultimate goal.

The notion of "pure" mysticism, for its part, can be understood to mean that mystical experiences are given only a minimum of interpretation and that the experiencing of mystical experiences remains the most important thing at the cost of a doctrinal superstructure that should be simply adopted and followed.

Mysticism itself was defined as a form of religious life characterized by mystical experiences together with their interpretations and various mystical-like experiences of a lesser intensity. The operational criteria for mystical experiences were provided by Paul Griffiths, who divides mystical experiences into three types: 1) An experience of pure consciousness, 2) an unmediated experience, and 3) a nondualistic experience (p. 46). The presence of any one of these three characteristics allows us to categorize the experience as mystical.

5.2. The Buddha and His Nirvâṇa

As to the Buddha's revolutionizing experience, we have to be satisfied with the fact that it is impossible to say anything historically certain about it. Yet the early Buddhists have formed a biographical image of the Buddha as the one who reached a mystical experience superior to the attainments of other wanderers (*śramaṇa*s) in the sense that only the Buddha's experience guaranteed a perfect liberation from suffering.

Thus, the Buddha is believed to have provided his contemporaries with a new answer to an old problem: how to overcome the experience that one's being-in-the-world is for the most part characterized by suffering. The appearance of this question in Indian religion during the period of the *Upaniṣads* is tied to a radical change in the *Seinsverständnis* of people. Prior to this, no ideas of a unique and solitary individual or an abstract and truly transcendent god existed (see p. 40), and consequently religion had been centered on guaranteeing the welfare of the *community* and a good life in the 'worldly' reality.

However, during the *Upaniṣadic* period the real essence of an individual came to be regarded as a transcendent soul (*âtman*) that was not of this world, and whose ultimate goal was a (re)unification with *Brahman*. The socio-cultural background for this juxtaposition of an individual and the external world that is then solved with an idea of a transcendent entity as the ultimate basis of both, was characterized by urbanization together with its concomitants: division of labour and a kind of individualism. Individualism, in turn, made possible the question of the meaning of the life of an individual and the anxiety related to it. Thus sociocultural factors induced a change in *Seinsverständnis* that then received expression in new religious ideas. (Chapter 3.1.1.)

However, although our sources stress that only the Buddha had found a satisfactory way to overcome suffering through his mystical experience, they do not give any detailed description of this revolutionizing experience. It is referred to as nirvâṇa in just one text, and 'nirvâṇa' appears in this connection only as a figure of speech, not as such a technical concept, which it later became (Vetter). Likewise, '*bodhi*' ('enlightenment') appears in one text only. (P. 101.)

In the *Mahâsaccakasutta*, the Buddha's experience is said to have consisted of three mental abilities acquired after four states of meditation (*dhyânas*). The third ability, the knowledge concerning the outflows (*âsavas*) of sensuality, becoming and ignorance and their destruction, is here the essence of the experience. It is modeled after the example of the four noble truths. (P. 103.)

5.3. Mystical Experience in Early Buddhism

It is striking that in the descriptions of the Buddha's experience there is a clear emphasis on the intellectual aspect as the experience is considered to have brought knowledge. However, in the *Aṭṭhakavagga* of the *Suttanipâta* we found passages that clearly point to a mystical experience that

is also thought to have consequences for the way a person understands his or her being-in-the-world (pp. 100–101).

This experience could count as a mystical pure consciousness event in the sense that in it a person is not unconscious although his or her consciousness is contentless or empty. If it were not completely empty, the experience, nevertheless, could very well be an unmediated mystical experience in the sense that the conceptual scheme that led a person to this experience is not part of the experience itself, which thus is ineffable. At least it is a nondualistic experience because it is explicitly said to transcend "diversification". Thus, these passages describe a mystical experience of complete unity in which suffering has ceased as the barriers between 'self' and the external world have broken down.

It seems to me that this experience could well represent something essential to the Buddha's original *Seinsverständnis*, or at least to the *Seinsverständnis* of the earliest community. It may have been suppressed when the ideological development took the form of *abhidharma*, in which a special "language of salvation" was elaborated at the cost of the claim that the ultimate goal is ineffable.

The tradition of the *Aṭṭhakavagga* seems to have continued in the notion of "cessation of mental representations and feeling" (*saññâvedayitanirodha*) (pp. 100–101), a yogic state of meditation that was given a Buddhist interpretation as "touching the immortal with one's body" (p. 96). In a few passages of the *Tipiṭaka*, it is clearly identified with nirvâṇa, and consequently Louis de la Vallée Poussin has called it the mystical aspect of nirvâṇa, the intellectual one being based on discernment of *dharma*s that typifies the *abhidharma*. (Pp. 96–97.)

This cessation is believed to take place at the peak of progressive states of meditation (*dhyâna*s). It is an experience that physically resembles a cataleptic trance, hibernation of some mammals, or coma. Mentally it is an experience where ordinary functions of sense-perception, concept-formation and ratiocination have ceased. (p. 99.)

It is, nevertheless, difficult to take this cessation as an experience of pure consciousness as it is usually conceived of as an unconscious state, although some early Buddhist authors have held that it was not "mindless" (*acittaka*) but that only mental *activity* had ceased in it. Moreover, as the Buddhists felt it problematic to explain how one could re-emerge from this state, they postulated a special consciousness that survived the state of cessation (*âlayavijñâna*). (Pp. 99–100.)

However, we cannot be certain whether *âlayavijñâna* is a purely theoretical concept, refers to an unconscious state, or to a conscious mystical experience. In any case, it is said to have an object and content (unlike a pure consciousness event), although they are "indistinct", "extremely subtle" and not experienced. As to the cessation (*saññâvedayitanirodha*) itself, if it were an integral aspect of nirvâṇa it would be much easier to understand its significance if it were a conscious mystical experience of

any of the three kinds. (Pp. 99–100.)

Although the experience the early Buddhists sought was an experience where the barriers of 'self' and the external world broke down in a feeling of ineffable unity, it came to be verbalized using strictly dualistic language presenting the reality as consisting of two spheres: the compounded (*saṁskṛta*) and the uncompounded (*asaṁskṛta*), representing *saṁsâra* and nirvâṇa, respectively. However, this dichotomy between 'worldly' and otherworldy spheres is not accompanied by a notion of an individual soul – as the Buddhist texts either deny the existence of this kind of an entity or refuse to take any stand on this question because such speculation is considered harmful to one's liberation. This latter alternative is the opinion of the earliest tradition. (Pp. 91–94, 84–90.)

Thus, the peculiar emptiness that belongs to the mystical experience of ineffable unity where the feeling of 'I' fades away has been accepted as such, without any conceptualization presenting the 'I' as a transcendent entity (be)longing to the transcendent sphere (cf. p. 40–41). In this sense, Buddhism has retained an element of *pure* mysticism.

5.4. The Monistic Ontology of the Mahâyâna

However, when we move on to Mahâyâna, the dualistic ontology as an analytic or ideological content of contentless or otherwise mystical experiences is abandoned. The mystical aspect of nirvâṇa is revitalized as the language of Mahâyâna texts takes clearly the form of criticism of language and discursive thinking. In other words, the Mahâyânist authors repeatedly use language and discursive thinking to show the limits of these two. In the background, on the one hand there seems to be a strengthened emphasis on meditation, and on the other new development in speculative thinking. (Pp. 104–124.)

The social background of this was characterized by discontent towards the institutionalized form of Buddhism and its disinclination towards "personal virtuosity" and by a more active role for laymen. Under these circumstances, Mahâyâna rose as a kind of protest movement emphasizing that the ultimate goal lies open to everyone, including laymen and monks who did not belong to any *nikâyas*. The Mahâyânists called themselves *bodhisattvas*, i.e. beings destined to become buddhas, a word that in Hînayâna had referred only to the 25 buddhas before their enlightenment. (Pp. 61–64.)

The egalitarianism of early Mahâyâna was accompanied by a monistic metaphysics essentially based upon the idea that the ultimate reality

behind all appearances and illusions was a kind of buddha-nature. Thus, in reality nobody was unenlightened, and the ultimate goal of everyone was only to realize his or her inherent buddha-nature. In this way the abandonment of the strict distinction between laymen and monks went hand in hand with the abandonment of the idea of two spheres of reality, the compounded *saṁsâra* and the uncompounded nirvâṇa. (Pp. 104–124, 130–145.)

The reason for the judgement that the phenomenal world is unreal is, of course, that it is subjectively constructed and thus cannot be objectively real. As subjective construction (the *vikalpa*s) ceases in mystical experiences which are reached through meditation, it is believed that in these states the true reality is seen and understood. However, as these experiences can only be adequately communicated verbally, the early Buddhists have of necessity given them a certain content through the use of certain concepts superimposed upon the experience after the actual experience. (Pp. 41, 91–94, 117–124.)

Naturally enough, at this point help was sought, in concepts related to the Buddha, the central figure of the tradition. Thus, the ultimate reality is referred to using such expressions as '*tathâgatagarbha*' (womb or germ of the *Tathâgata*), '*dharmadhâtu*' (dharma-element) and '*dharmakâya*' (Dharma-body), revealing a tendency to mythologize the mystical experience in terms of the biographical image of the Buddha (*Tathâgata*). (Pp. 108–110.)

5.5. Language and Discursive Thinking as "Skillful Means"

In chapter 4. we saw that the Buddha has been conceived as embodying his message, the Dharma, in quite a concrete manner, to the extent that explicit analogies between his physical body and the Dharma have been elaborated. Likewise, there has been a tendency to see an equivalence between the Buddha's body and the cosmos, so that the compounded and uncompounded realities are thus bridged and a unity is created.

It is obvious that the Buddhological conceptions contain much mythological elaboration of the meaning of the Buddha and have nothing to do directly with mystical experiences. But when we move on to the deeper level of Buddhist ontology, we encounter the influence of the mystical way of experiencing, even in the way the Buddha's position has been understood.

Thus, even though the Buddha is said to be the "truly real fact" (p. 132), it is also said that even he and his enlightenment are mere illusion

and mere words and signs (pp. 113). This double-nature of words like 'buddha', '*bodhi*', '*dharmadhâtu*', etc., is explained with the concept of 'skillful means' (*upâya*): although terms like 'buddha' do not ultimately describe anything directly they, nevertheless, are a skillful means of speaking indirectly about the vision reached in mystical experiences. Thus, '*upâya*s' are like metaphors in that they convey a surplus of meaning that does not lend itself to literal description. (Pp. 114–115.)

However, in Buddhism neither of the two terms of a metaphor have priority over the other as these metaphors are usually capable of being turned around. This is most obvious in the case of 'emptiness' (*śûnyatâ*), an expression through which the ultimate truth of mystical experiences is expressed in the *Prajñâpâramitâ*. It is a pure negation with which all discursive thinking and concept formation are given their right status as embodying only a relative truth (*saṁvṛti satya*). Thus, "form is emptiness". But as 'emptiness' also is a word, "emptiness is form" as well. (Pp. 85, 94, 106, 112–113.)

The same holds also for the *Yogâcâra/Vijñânavâda* tradition, in which the phenomenal world is judged as "the thinking mind only" (*cittamâtratam̐*), or "representation only" (*vijñaptimâtratam̐*). However, after a careful analysis, it is concluded that the principle of *vijñaptimâtratam̐* should also be transcended so that being and non-being no longer are opposite categories. Thus, our sources do not purport to present anything absolute in contradistinction to something relative, but to overcome or transcend this dichotomy which is only apparent on the level of discursive thinking. (Pp. 121–124.)

This same dialectic has also been used with regard to the distinction between Hînayâna and Mahâyâna. Namely, if the Mahâyânists (*bodhisattva*s) distinguish Hînayânists (*śrâvaka*s) from themselves as those who wrongly believe in distinctions (especially between compounded and uncompounded), they themselves fall prey to making absolute distinctions. Thus, the distinction between Hînayâna and Mahâyâna is explained to be only a skillful means used by the Buddha to meet the needs of people with different mental capacities (a relative distinction). In reality, however, there is only one vehicle (*ekayâna*). (Pp. 137–139.)

In *Yogâcâra/Vijñânavâda*, this conviction of the relativity of language (*prapañca*) and discursive thinking (*vikalpa*) in contradistinction to mystical vision culminated in the idea of "unconstructed awareness" (*nirvikalpakajñâna*). This *may* count as a mystical pure consciousness event, and at least as an unmediated and nondualistic mystical experience. As such, it has been of highest importance as a means towards supreme enlightenment. (Pp. 118–120.)

5.6. Mystical Experience and Interpretation

However, I do not intend to claim that there is in Buddhist tradition a way to overcome the human condition of being-in-the-world and to find a direct contact with the ultimate reality not affected by specifically human categories. To say that to transcend language and discursive thinking is to find the ultimate reality, is only a human interpretation. And if we only consider the mystical experience as such, uninterpreted, – "*die Stille stillt*" (p. 37 n. 137).

Thus, even a pure consciousness event – if interpreted – is a human mode of being-in-the-world in which one is not in a "state of a stone or plant" (p. 100) or of an animal or god for that matter. And, as uninterpreted, it is nothing and not even that. To transcend one's *everyday* human condition is specifically human because, of logical necessity, only humans are capable of it. This, in fact, is also the Buddhist conviction. Mystical experiences are thus human ways of experiencing one's being-in-the-world, although in an unusual way. If interpreted as totally transcending human reality, they become parts of a mythology of salvation that pictures man as fallen from his or her primal happiness that can be regained through a specific path.

Here we also met the dilemma of describing and interpreting mystical experiences: we have to understand and interpret unconstructed experiences with constructive knowledge and constructive language because "thrownness into the world" means "proximally and for the most part" being thrown into a communicative world, and *Seinsverständnis* based on these abilities. (Pp. 36–38, 41–43, 94.)

This tension between mystical vision and everyday *Seinsverständnis* can also be seen in the background of the idea of the Buddha's three bodies. The absolute Dharma-body (*dharmakâya*) or the body of own essence (*svâbhâvikakâya*) represents the ultimate reality, whereas the body of enjoyment (*sambhogakâya*) and the apparitional body (*nirmâṇakâya*) are bodies with visible form (*rûpa*) and belong to the level of relative truth. Nevertheless, they are all bodies of the Buddha and express the all-pervasive quality of his wisdom. The true nature of the Buddha is the Dharma-body, the latter two being only like masks that he assumes in order to establish a contact with people in the 'world'. (Pp. 132–137.)

5.7. Summing up the Results

The Buddhist tradition as examined here has from the beginning contained a current of mystical experiencing that has influenced Buddhist ideology and mythology that, in turn, has affected experiencing by giving it meaning. Although we cannot know what the Buddha actually experienced, the earliest accounts we have ascribe to him a message based on a mystical experience of neither perception nor no perception that has later survived in Buddhist tradition as a state of cessation of mental representations and feeling. In the *Yogâcârabhûmi*, a special consciousness, the *âlayavijñâna*, was for the first time postulated in order to explain the continuity of consciousness before and after the cessation.

The cessation seems to have been at some point an integral aspect of nirvâṇa although the (inauthentic) descriptions of the Buddha's nirvâṇa exclusively stress its intellectual aspect which came to be the dominant one. In the early Mahâyâna, the influence of mystical experience is seen in the role of Perfection of wisdom (*Prajñâpâramitâ*) as non-discursive wisdom that transcends language and ordinary categories of thought. In the *Yogâcâra/Vijñâvâda* tradition, mystical experience takes the form of "unconstructed wisdom" that may be said best to bring to the fore the idea of going beyond language and reason.

It was, however, difficult to decide the precise nature of these various forms of mystical experience. Thus, it is also obvious that 'nirvâṇa' is a mythological concept, expressing the ultimate goal of Buddhism as a matter of principle, with no unequivocal reference to human experience. Griffiths' operational criteria for mystical experience turned out to be a good instrument in the sense that in all cases the experiences could be definitely said to bear at least one of these characteristics.

Thus, we can say that the Buddhism of the texts here analyzed is essentially mysticism in the sense that its central doctrines and practice are penetrated by mysticism. We may also say that here we are dealing with "pure mysticism", as the sources are unwilling to present any absolute interpretations that would objectively embody an absolute meaning that could be grasped on faith alone. All conceptual interpretations are only a skillful means to point to the experience or mystical knowledge that ultimately can be grasped through subjective intuition only. In other words, experiencing takes precedence over conceptualization, and thus faith (*śraddhâ*) is in principle only a preliminary means towards "seeing as it really is" (*yathâbhûtaṁ*).

Although in this study we have analyzed only a certain selection of texts deriving from a limited span of time, we are entitled to say that Buddhism is above all, or essentially, mysticism because those texts picture the founder of Buddhism as having taught that true liberation from suffe-

ring could only be reached through mystical experiences and a *Seinsverständnis* affected by them. Consequently, the development of Buddhist doctrine and mythology has been an elaboration and revitalization of the Buddha's revolutionizing experience and its interpretations.

By this I do not mean that in Buddhism (or in any religion) only that which is historically original is genuine. I only mean that the historical foundations of Buddhism include a strong emphasis on the importance of mystical experiences and the related *Seinsverständnis*, and that this element has to a great extent guided the subsequent development of Buddhist teachings during the period from which our sources derive.

We should bear in mind, however, that other trends than mysticism have obviously existed from the earliest days of Buddhism. This is due to the fact that the movement we now know under the name of Buddhism soon attracted people with various interests and inclinations. Thus, trends that appeal more to the constructive activity of the human mind began to develop side by side with the mystical current. Consequently, for instance the innumerable statues of the Buddha and their cult, can be seen as analoguous with the non-mystical features of Buddhology that represent attempts to grasp the Buddha's meaning on the level of discursive thinking and language. However, the distinction between mystical and non-mystical forms of Buddhism does not run parallel to the distinction between laymen and monks.

It is beyond the scope of this study to estimate the place of mysticism in present day Buddhism. Moreover, no attempt is being made to press Buddhism as a whole into the procrustean bed of mysticism, but only to point out that the historical roots of Buddhism lie essentially in mystical experiences. The position taken here is that André Bareau can be said to have touched on a most important issue in writing that Buddhism is essentially based on pure mysticism. It is my sincerest hope that this discussion has succeeded in demonstrating in what sense his thesis is justified.

APPENDIX I

MMK 1:1–14 [Streng 1967, 183–184]

1. Never are any existing things found to originate
   From themselves, from something else, from both, or from no cause.

2. There are four conditioning causes:
   A cause (*hetu*), objects of sensations, "immediately preceding condition," and of course the predominant influence – there is no fifth.

3. Certainly there is no self-existence (*svabhâva*) of existing things in conditioning causes, etc.;
   And if no self-existence exists, neither does "other-existence" (*parabhâva*).

4. The efficient cause (*kriyâ*) does not exist possessing a conditioning cause,
   Nor does the efficient cause exist without possessing a conditioning cause.
   Conditioning causes are not without efficient causes,
   Nor are there [conditioning causes] which possess efficient causes.

5. Certainly those things are called "conditioning causes" whereby something originates after having come upon them;
   As long as something has not originated, why are they not so long "*non*-conditioning-causes"?

6. There can be a conditioning cause neither of a non-real thing nor of a real thing.
   Of what non-real thing is there a conditioning cause? And if it is [already] real, what use is a cause?

7. If an element (*dharma*) occurs which is neither real no non-real nor both real-and-non-real,
   How can there be a cause which is effective in this situation?

8. Just that which is without an object of sensation is accepted as a real element;
   Then if there is an element having no object of sensation, how is it possible to have an object of sensation?

9. When no elements have originated, [their] disappearance is not possible.
   Therefore it is not proper to speak of an "immediately preceding condition"; for if something has already ceased, what cause is there for it?

10. Since existing things which have no self-existence are not real,
It is not possible at all that: "This thing 'becomes' upon the existence of that other one."

11. The product does not reside in the conditioning causes, individually or collectively,
So how can that which does not reside in the conditioning causes result from conditioning causes?

12. The "non-real" would result from those conditioning causes.
Why then would a product not proceed also from non-causes?

13. On the one hand, the product [consists in its] conditioning causes; on the other hand, the causes do not consist of themselves.
How can a product [resulting] from [conditioning causes] not consisting of themselves be consisting of those causes?

14. Therefore, that product does not consist in those causes; [yet] it is agreed that a product does not consist of non-causes.
How [can there be] a conditioning cause or non-cause when a product is not produced?

APPENDIX II

Lotus Sûtra pp. 350–351 [Kern]

And on that occasion the Lord uttered the following stanzas:

61. His body becomes thoroughly pure, clear as if consisting of lapis lazuli; he who keeps this sublime Sûtra is always a pleasant sight for (all) creatures.

62. As on the surface of a mirror an image is seen, so on his body this world. Being selfborn, he sees no other beings. Such is the perfectness of his body.

63. Indeed, all beings who are in this world, men, gods, demons, goblins, the inhabitants of hell, the spirits, and the brute creation are seen reflected on that body.

64. The aerial cars of the gods up to the extremity of existence, the rocks, the ridge of the horizon, the Himâlaya, Sumeru, and great Meru, all are seen on that body.

65. He also sees the Buddhas on his body, along with the disciples and other sons of Buddha; likewise the Bodhisattvas who lead a solitary life, and those who preach the law to congregations.

66. Such is the perfectness of his body, though he has not yet obtained a divine body; the natural property of his body is such.

APPENDIX III

Ratnagotravibhâga IX B § 3 [Takasaki 1966, 246–247]

§ 3. Bodhisattva's Compassion. The parable of a Householder.

"For example, O Sâgamarati, suppose there were an only son of some distinguished person or householder. Suppose he were beloved, handsome, affectionate, quite agreeable in his appearance. Now suppose this boy, being a child, would fall into a pit of night-soil while playing. Thereupon the mother and relatives of this boy would see him fall into the impure pit. Upon seeing this they would deeply sigh, lament and would cry out. They could not, however, take the boy out by entering into the pit. After that the boy's father would come to that place, and would see his only son fallen in the pit of night-soil. Upon seeing that sight, he being affected by the intention to pull out his only son, would hurry to enter the pit with full speed without any feeling of disgust, and would take out his only son. O Sâgamarati, this example was made in order to make known a special meaning. Which relation should be known [between illustrations and illustrated meaning]? O Sâgamarati, 'a pit of night-soil' is a name for the Phenomenal Life. 'An only son' is a name for the living beings, because Bodhisattvas have a notion of the only son towards all living beings. 'Mother and relatives' is a name for those people who belong to the Vehicles of śrâvaka and Pratyekabuddha, since they, having seen the living beings fallen into the world of transmigration, are distressed and lament, but have no capacity to rescue [the living beings]. 'The distinguished person or the householder' is a name for the Bodhisattva who is pure, unpolluted, of unpolluted mind, has attained the direct perception of the immutable Absolute (*asaṁskṛta dharma*), but still, in order to bring living beings to the maturity, connects himself to the Phenomenal World by his own will. O Sâgamarati, such is the Great Compassion of the Bodhisattva that, being perfectly free from all bondages, he again assumes the origination into Existence. Being possessed of the skill of means and the Transcendental Intellect, he is never affected by impurities; and, in order to extirpate all the bondage of Defilements from the living beings, he preaches the Doctrine."

APPENDIX IV

Saṁdhinirmocanasûtra I:2, I:5 [Lamotte]

2. Pourquoi le conditionné n'est-il ni conditionné, ni inconditionné? Pourquoi l'inconditioné n'est-il ni inconditionné, ni conditionné?

R. Le mot "conditionné" est un terme métaphorique inventé par le Maître. Ce terme métaphorique est imaginaire; c'est une expression de l'expérience vulgaire. Cette expression – expression de l'expérience vulgaire où les imaginations foisonnent – ne répond à rien d'absolu. Donc il n'y a pas de conditionné. Le mot "inconditionné", lui aussi, fait partie de l'expérience vulgaire. Et s'il s'agissait de quelque expression autre que "conditionné" et "inconditionné", il en irait exactement de même. – Mais, dira-t-on, une expression ne va pas sans un objet désigné. Quel est donc ici l'objet? – C'est la [réalité] ineffable sur laquelle les Saints, par le saint savoir et la sainte vue, sont parfaitement éclairés; mais pour éclairer les autres sur l'ineffable Nature des choses, ils ont forgé l'appellation "conditionné".

5. De même, il y a des êtres puérils, des profanes qui n'ont pas obtenu la sainte sagesse supramondaine et ne reconnaissent pas l'ineffable Nature des choses. En présence des conditionnés et incondionnés, ils pensent que les conditionnés et inconditionnés qui leur apparaissent existent réellement. Se basant sur ce qu'ils voient et entendent, ils croient fermement à tout cela, et s'expriment vulgairement en disant: "Ceci est réel; le reste est faux". Plus tard, ils devront corriger leurs affirmations.

Mais il y a des êtres avertis, des "Voyants de la Vérité", qui ont obtenu la sainte sagesse supramondaine et reconnaissent l'ineffable Nature des choses. En présence des conditionnés et inconditionnés, ils pensent que les conditionnés et inconditionnés qui leur apparaissent n'existent pas, que ce sont là des notions fabriquées intellectuellement, des produits idéaux, des sortes de magie, des troubles mentaux, auxquels on applique le nom et les termes de "conditionné" et "inconditionné". Sans se baser sur ce qu'ils voient et entendent, ils ne croient pas sérieusement à tout cela; ils évitent de s'exprimer vulgairement en disant: "Ceci est réel, le reste est faux". Toutefois, pour désigner aux autres ces objets, ils recourent à l'expérience vulgaire. Plus tard, ils ne devront pas corriger leur manière de voir. Ainsi donc, les Saints, parfaitement éclairés sur cette réalité ineffable par le saint savoir et la sainte vue, ont forgé les appellations "conditionné" et "inconditionné", pour éclairer les autres sur l'ineffable Nature des choses.

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Glossary and Index of Sanskrit and Pâli Words

The following index lists the Pâli and Sanskrit words appearing in this study. Proper names are omitted with the exception of the names of Buddhist schools. Sanskrit and Pâli forms are used according to whether the source is in Sanskrit or Pâli. Both forms are given only when they both appear in this study. In case a word is the same in Sanskrit and Pâli, this is indicated (with "S. & P.") only when the word appears is in this study from both Sanskrit and Pâli sources.

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